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THE
ANCIENT RÉGIME.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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THE
ANCIENT RÉGIME:

A TALE.

BY
G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF
"THE GIPSY," "THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE
OLD SCHOOL," ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
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1841.

DEDICATION.

TO

ONE OF THE EARLIEST, THE BEST, AND

THE WISEST OF MY FRIENDS,

ALEXANDER HUNTER, ESQ. W.S.

&c. &c. &c.

This Book

IS DEDICATED,

BY

ONE GRATEFUL TO HIM FOR MUCH KINDNESS, AND

BOUND TO HIM BY OLD AFFECTION.

G. P. R. JAMES.

P R E F A C E.

AN apology is due to the public for the employment in the very title of this book of a word taken from a foreign language. Although the term "*réyime*" has been commonly used in England in the sense which is here given to it, I certainly should not have retained it had I been able to discover any purely English expression to signify that state of society and government which existed in France immediately before the first revolution. There are doubtless many other faults in these volumes which equally require excuse, and I can only trust that upon all these points the public will extend to me the same lenity which it has hitherto evinced.

In the following tale I have deviated, in some degree, from the usual plan of my romances, and have undertaken a somewhat difficult task, though that task is one which I had long contemplated before I began the execution, and for which I had arranged the plot and characters with the hope of producing a certain moral effect upon the minds of my fellow-men, at the same time that I afforded them amusement for an idle hour.

A subject of no slight interest was to be found in the education of a girl from infancy to womanhood by a man unconnected with her by blood, together with the results to both; but at the same time, to treat it properly was not an easy undertaking. In attempting it, I have striven to depict the fine shades of character and emotion, rather than the broader contrasts, the scenic light and shade, and the somewhat melodramatic effects, for which there is a great fondness in the present day. But I believe the public can appreciate and like two styles of composition very different from each other;

and that while tales of strongly excited passion, of crime, and sorrow, may occupy its attention at one moment, it will not fail to turn to quieter paintings of the human heart, if the pictures are executed with fidelity and vigour. Whether I have in any degree succeeded in doing so in the following pages, the reader must judge; but I trust, at all events, he will find that the story in which the various characters are brought forward may afford sufficient interest to carry him not unwillingly through the work.

In the character of Annette de St. Morin, I have had the peculiar difficulties to contend with which every man must encounter when he endeavours to depict the many fine gradations of thought and feeling produced in a woman's bosom by the different events of her life; and, certainly, the circumstances in which I have placed her have not made the task more easy. Nevertheless, I trust the picture is a true one, and I believe it to be so. The rule which I have gone by in painting this character is, to

have all the observations that I have made through life, upon the nature and conduct of woman, present to my mind, like colours ready on a palette; and I have never asked myself what would be my own sensations in any particular circumstance alluded to, but what would be the feelings of a woman, of such a woman, and of one so educated. Whether I have divined right, or whether I have made a mistake, women alone can judge.

In the character of the abbé, Count de Castelneau, I had scarcely less matter for reflection; and although I know I might have placed him — as a consequence of his own acts — in much more striking and dramatic situations, I have deliberately refrained from doing so, satisfied that there was a sufficient portion of adventure in the book to make it interesting to the mere lover of story, and seeking to avoid any thing the least meretricious and unreal in the portraiture of characters drawn with a higher view.

The rest of the personages I believe to be human beings, without more of evil or more of good than is to be found in a very great number of our fellow-creatures. Many of the traits in the Baron de Cajare are not only natural, but recorded matters of fact ; and those that are so comprise every point that is at all out of the ordinary run of events.

For various reasons, with which I will not trouble the reader at present, I judged it impracticable to remove the period of the story into any other reign than that of Louis XV., although the insane debaucheries of his latter years rendered that monarch's court the last which one would willingly depict. I trust, however, that in those passages where the scene is laid in Paris or Versailles, nothing will be found which can offend the most delicate mind ; and I am certain that not a word can be discovered which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to encourage vice, or which has for its object any thing but the promotion

of that high and holy philosophy which came from God, and leads man to him.

That the work may please you, reader, is my sincere wish ; but if it should benefit you also, if there should be one sentence in it, or one passage, which may elevate your views or purify your purposes, or withdraw you from an error, or lead you to a virtue, I have done all that I could hope, and have more than my reward.

THE AUTHOR.

The Shrubbery, Walmer

June, 1841.

THE
ANCIENT RÉGIME.

CHAPTER I.

IN a low-roofed room, on the seventh story of a house in one of the back streets of the city of Paris, and in the year 17—, sat a man habited as an artisan, and bearing in his whole appearance the signs and tokens of a person in the lowest ranks of life. His dress was soiled and dirty, his face and hands not very clean, his sleeves were tucked up nearly to the elbows, and a large leathern apron, which once had been white, hung from his neck, and was girded round his middle. In form he was a powerful

man, with broad shoulders, a deep chest, and a sinewy arm; and his countenance was fine, though not exactly handsome, with a frank and free, yet thoughtful, expression, a fine open brow, with a look of shrewd good sense and some careless humour. In height he stood well nigh six feet, and in age might have seen about seven or eight and twenty years.

In the centre of the room, which was large, though, as we have said, low in the roof, was a table covered with various implements used by the man in pursuit of his trade. There were two lamps, one of which was of a very peculiar form, standing together in the centre of a sort of tray; and, beside them, lay a multitude of pincers, of all sorts and sizes, several small files, numerous little coils of gold and silver wire, one or two small crucibles and ladles, a watch-glass half full of fine oil, and a blow-pipe. All these signs and circumstances, to the eye of the initiated, would have revealed at once that the man was a filigree-worker — a trade then much followed in the French capital, though it was the jewellers and great gold-

smiths who swallowed up the principal part of its profits, leaving little but a bare subsistence and all the labour to those who produced the various beautiful little ornaments which decorated the toilet table of every fine lady in those days.

The man, at the moment the reader entered his room, was occupied in the pursuit of his calling. From a soiled sheet of paper before him, covered all over with tracings of the most beautiful arabesques that it was possible to conceive, he was imitating, with the greatest nicety and delicacy, in silver, a small basket, representing the cup of a lotus. Now he plied with the utmost rapidity a small pair of pincers; now he used the file to remove any little irregularity; now, by the use of the blow-pipe, he fixed the numerous threads and filaments together, at places where the juncture could scarcely be perceived. Then, when he had done a certain portion, he paused, looked at it, and seemed to admire his own work.

At length, as the filigree-worker was thus proceeding, a slight noise from the other side of the room, a mere rustle, as it were, caught the

quick ear of the Parisian artisan, and, starting up from his stool, he laid down the pincers and the little basket, and, moving with a quiet step across the room, peeped into a cradle, which stood within a few feet of the fire-place.

Therein lay as beautiful an infant as ever was seen : a little girl, fine, healthy, rosy, seeming to set at defiance all those sad ills of poverty by which she was evidently surrounded. She had woke up from sleep, and when she saw the well-known face above her, she smiled gladly and moved her little arms. The artisan gazed upon her for a moment thoughtfully, then shook his head with somewhat of a sigh, saying, "I must not take thee up, for I have nothing to give thee. Sleep, sleep, my baby, for I must work for food;" and rocking the cradle gently with his hand, he endeavoured to lull the child into slumber again by singing to her one of the many little lullabies which were then, and still are, common in France. He had just succeeded, and was still going on for a little, to make the conquest of the drowsy god secure, when the door opened, and a good-

looking woman about his own age entered, and approached him quietly. There was some degree of sorrow, and some degree of timidity, in her look; and indeed her face was like that of one who brings tidings that will certainly grieve, and may perhaps offend; and yet the good artisan did not seem of a disposition likely to be offended easily, or to be approached with fear — at least by a woman.

“Well, Margiette,” he said, in a low voice, “would he give you the money?”

“Not a sou,” replied the woman, in a sad tone: “he said that he had never in his life paid a farthing for any work before it was done, and never would.”

The man bit his lip, and his brow grew dark for a moment. “Well, well,” he said with a smile, and a sigh the next moment, “the man’s not wrong, after all.”

“He said something too,” said the woman, “about your not having finished the last *vinai-grette* which he bought of you, at the time you promised it.”

“How could I?” exclaimed the man,

sharply. "Did I not burn my hand? and could I do fine work with my hand all swelled?"

"But he saw you at the fair at Charenton," said the woman.

"To be sure," answered her husband, with a laugh. "I don't walk with my hands, so I could go to Charenton though I could not work——But you watch the child, Margiette! — I must sit up and work all night, and all day to-morrow. I can get the basket finished before seven to-morrow. It is only for the child I care: what can be done for it? — Hark ye, Margiette: take that lamp I am not using to the *revendeuse*, and see what she will give you for it: the poor babe must have something to eat, and you, too, my Margiette: I can do very well without."

The woman had still continued to gaze in his face with a timid look, as if she had something to say which she was half afraid of uttering, but she now answered, "I have got something for the child, Pierre, here in my basket."

"How, how?" demanded the man, somewhat sharply. "How did you get it?"

“Nay, do not be angry: I would not have taken it, Pierre, but for the child. There were three gentlemen in Monsieur Fiteau’s shop changing some gold, and buying some lace; and one of them, an abbé, seeing me well nigh inclined to weep when Fiteau refused me the money, began to ask me questions; and I told him that I should not care about the matter, for that my husband could soon get the work done, but that there was a child, and a child’s hunger would not wait. Upon which he offered me some money. I would only take half a livre, for I thought you would be angry; but, as I came along, I bought this little loaf, and some milk for the child; and now,” she added, “here are five sous more: if you will let me, I will go and buy something for your supper.”

“No,” said her husband, “no: you did very right, good wife, to take the money for the child, but I cannot eat the bread of charity while I can work. Make something for the little one and for yourself: I can do very well without till to-morrow.”

The woman declared that she would not taste any thing if he did not; and, as usual, by persevering she gained her point. They divided the bread into three portions, reserved one, together with the milk, against the child's waking, and each took another. The woman ate hers with calm and quiet resignation; but the man swallowed two or three mouthfuls with difficulty, and then, putting down the crust upon the table, burst into tears, exclaiming, "This is the first time I have eaten the bread of charity! Oh, may it be the last!"

Almost as he spoke, there was a knock at the chamber door, a hand laid upon the latch thereof, and a stranger entered the room. He was dressed in the habit of an abbé, which was, in some degree, clerical, and distinguished from the rest of the world those personages who had taken what are called the first vows, which, in fact, bound them to nothing. Those vows were continually renounced at pleasure; and even while they remained in force they did not restrain the person who had taken them from mingling with the full current of worldly things,

enjoying all the pleasures, and but too often sharing in all the vices, of society. Abbés were prevented, indeed, from marrying till they had formally cast off those vows; but this restriction was of course only an occasion for additional licentiousness; so that it became a common saying, in regard to any one who had a numerous family, "He has as many children as an abbé."

The person who entered might be five or six and thirty, and was a fine powerful man, though the countenance was somewhat pale and sallow, and the eyes were near together, though fine; while a curl about the lip denoted that there was some bitterness of spirit within, either from disappointment, or a turn of mind naturally sarcastic.

There is, perhaps, as much of what we may call expression in a man's carriage, and particularly in his step, as there is in his countenance; and the step of the abbé was very peculiar. It was slow and noiseless, but firm and fixed. Though his shoulders were not round, his head bent a little forward, and his

full dark eyes, when resting on any object, remained half open, without the slightest wandering or movement. Though keen in themselves, no motion betrayed the secrets of the heart: they seemed full of inquiry, but answered nothing.

I mean not by any means to say that his countenance was without expression, for it had much peculiar character of its own; though the expression varied only according to his will, and not according to his emotions. On the present occasion, his lip bore a benign and chastened smile; and though he entered with his broad-brimmed hat on, he removed it immediately as he advanced towards the table. The filigree-worker and his wife both rose; and the woman dropped a low courtesy, while her husband fixed his eyes with an inquiring and even somewhat stern glance upon the stranger, and then suddenly turned and looked for a moment towards the dying embers of their small fire, till he had wiped away all traces of the late emotion from his face.

“ I have been inquiring into your situation,

my good lady, since I saw you," said the abbé, "and from the account which even that hard-hearted old usurer Fiteau gives of you and your husband, I have become interested in you, and wish to know if I can serve you."

The woman hesitated, and Pierre himself turned round and remained silent for a single minute, gazing on the stranger with a curious and somewhat doubtful smile. At length he answered, "We have much to thank you for already, sir, and it is an easy thing to serve people so poor as we are."

"Not always," answered the abbé without a change of countenance: "each person in this world has his particular views, and I already know that you have yours."

"How so, sir?" said the man, again gazing on him eagerly: "have I ever seen you before?"

"Not that I know of, my good friend," replied the abbé with a smile; "but your question is easily answered. There are about ten men in Paris under the king, who, if I had offered them half a dozen livres, would

have refused to take them. Now, some twenty minutes ago, I offered your wife here, when I saw she was in distress, a handful of the change I had just received. She contented herself with half a livre, and when I urged her to take more, said that her husband would be angry if she did. Now, have I not reason to say, that you have your own peculiar views? — But, to put all such things aside, tell me if I can serve you, and how.”

“ Only, sir, I believe, by ordering some of these trinkets from me,” replied the man in a tone considerably softened; and he pointed to the basket he was working.

The abbé took it up and examined it. “ It is very beautiful,” he said: “ come, I will buy this of you, and pay you for it now — though I, alas !” he added, “ have neither wife nor children to please with such gauds. What is the price of it ?”

“ Nay, sir, I cannot sell you that,” replied the man: “ it is promised to Monsieur Fiteau; but I can soon work you another exactly like it.”

“ You can work him another,” replied the abbé, somewhat sharply. “ Why should I wait, who am willing to befriend you, and he not, who will do nothing for you ? ”

“ Because I have promised it to him, sir,” replied the man simply, “ and I cannot break my word.”

“ You are right,” answered the abbé: “ I applaud your honesty, and you shall work me another. What may the price be, my good friend ? ”

“ Nay, sir, I hardly know,” replied the filigree-worker. “ Monsieur Fiteau pays me five livres for my labour, and finds the silver ; but what he charges I cannot tell.”

The stranger took up the basket and examined it with a thoughtful air, murmuring as if to himself, “ The usurer ! — What may the silver be worth ? ”

“ Some six or seven livres when spun into wire,” replied the man.

“ And he gives you five,” rejoined the abbé, “ taking forty for himself. Out upon it ! Here, my friend, here are ten livres to begin with :

when you bring me the basket done, I will give you twenty more, and then I shall have the trinket at about one half of the price which this man Fiteau would charge me for it."

The filigree-worker suffered the abbé to put the money down upon the table without taking it up. He looked at it somewhat wistfully, indeed, and then said, "I should not wish for any thing beforehand, but for the sake of the child. We have a hard matter to support ourselves, sir, and, to say the truth, the poor babe is sometimes sadly pinched. I feared this night that I should be obliged to sell some of my tools, or let the poor babe want till to-morrow night."

"Ay, so your wife told me," replied the abbé, "and it was about that I came hither. Do you love the child very much?"

The man gazed at him with an inquiring look for a moment, ere he replied; but he said at length, "We do love the child much, sir! Can you doubt it?"

"Well, then," rejoined the abbé, "what I have to propose will give you pleasure. I want

some object to fix my affections upon in this world. I have many rich benefices, and but few objects of thought or care. You shall give me your child to educate—I will adopt it as my own, and lead it forward unto wealth and high station. What say you, will you consent?”

The proposal was in every respect an extraordinary one; for it must be recollected, that the distinctions of classes in France was at that time preserved with the greatest strictness; and though there might have been nothing wonderful at all in a wealthy abbé adopting the child of any poor noble, yet the idea of his selecting an object for adoption from either the class of *roturiers* or artisans could never have presented itself until that moment to the mind of the filigree-worker and his wife. Yet, strange to say, it did not seem to surprise either of them very much.

“Will you give us some time to consider of it?” said the man, bluntly.

“How long would you have?” demanded the abbé.

The filigree-worker thought for a moment,

and then required four days, to which the stranger consented; and after speaking with them for some time longer upon their circumstances and situation, the abbé gave them his address and left them.

The filigree-worker continued to labour at the basket during the whole night; but though he had made considerable progress before the next morning, the trinket was not yet completed when the daylight began to peep in at the high window. As soon as day did appear, however, Pierre rose from his labour, washed his face and hands clean, cast away his working apron and jacket, and put on his holyday coat. He then took five out of the ten livres which the abbé had given him; woke his wife, who had gone to bed, with a kiss; and, telling her that he was about to set out, but would be back certainly at the end of the three days, he descended the long narrow staircase of the house, and issued forth into the street.

The artisan plodded onward with a quick step and a resolute face through the gates of Paris and the suburbs, past St. Denis, Ecouen,

and Luzarches, till he reached Chantilly, towards the hour of four in the afternoon. It was a long walk: the road was dusty, and the filigree-worker paused for an hour to get some food, and to rest himself; but at the end of that time he recommenced his journey, proceeding by Creil, till he came to the pleasant village of Cauffry under Liancourt, where he stopped for the night. Early in the following morning he went on again, through the rich and beautiful country which surrounds Clermont, amidst hills and vallies, and brooks and fields, till he reached that pretty town, which he seemed to know well, for he stopped to speak to two or three acquaintances. From more than one he seemed to hear news that grieved him, for his countenance grew sad; and he quickened his pace as he quitted the town, hastening onwards by Fitzjames and Argenlieu, where he turned from the high road, and, following the course of the Arre, bent his steps towards the small village and château of Argencerre. When he was within about half a mile, however, of the village church, he thought he heard some mournful sounds coming up from

the valley, and hurrying on towards the side of the hill, he saw winding away from the château towards the church the long line of a funeral. Pierre gazed forward for a moment or two with his hands clasped together; then, sitting down upon the bank, he covered his eyes and wept. Whatever was the cause of his emotion, the object of his journey seemed to be accomplished; for, without proceeding any farther, he turned back upon his path, and made the best of his way to Paris.

CHAP. II.

It was the morning of the fourth day after that which closed with the visit of the abbé to the high chamber of the filigree-worker; and Pierre Morin, with his good wife Margiette, stood together in the middle of the same chamber, the wife holding in her arms the beautiful child we have mentioned, while the husband was performing what appeared to be a very barbarous operation. With one of the small sharp-pointed knives which he employed in his art, the man was tracing two or three small fine lines on the baby's arm, very high up, so as generally to be covered by the clothes in which she was dressed. The child did not cry or give any sign of pain, but smiled in the man's face, although the next moment the lines which he had drawn, and which were at first colourless, took the form of a Maltese cross.

and became distinctly marked by a small portion of blood oozing through each. As soon as the artisan saw this appearance, he took up a box filled with a black powder, and rubbed it upon the spot. The application seemed to make the wound smart, for the little girl now began to cry; but was soon pacified again, the man kissing her affectionately, and saying, “It is for thine own good, *petiotte*. — Come, wife,” he continued, “cover that over, and let us take her away. — Bless thy sweet eyes, child! it may be long ere I see them again.”

The wife took the child in her arms, the man put on his hat, and away they went together, threading the long and crowded streets till they came into a more airy and pleasant neighbourhood, where, passing along one of the broad quays, they crossed the river by a bridge, and approached the palace of the Luxembourg. In one of the best streets of that quarter, they stopped before a fine tall house, the door of which, however, was open, exposing to view the stone staircase within, which was then — as is but too common in the French

capital even now — covered with filth of the most disgusting description. Standing in the doorway was a man who might be a tradesman, or who might be the intendant of some gentleman; and Pierre Morin, with a low bow and humble tone, asked if the Abbé de Castelneau lived there.

The man drew a little on one side, as if to let them pass, replying, “*Au second,*” which may be translated, “Up two pair.”

He said no more, and with the same taciturnity Pierre Morin and Margiette began to climb the long and dirty staircase which led to the apartments of the Abbé de Castelneau. It at once became evident to the filigree-worker and his wife, that the abbé was in what was and is called “*chambres garnies,*” or furnished apartments. Now such was a state of life which, in that day, except under particular circumstances, implied a much less degree of respectability than that which was termed being *dans ses meubles*, or in a house of one's own; for it generally happened, with all people of station in the city, that they either had their

own hotel, their own apartments and furniture, or apartments lent to them by some of their wealthier relations, who resided in those large mansions which all the principal nobility then maintained in Paris. Another thing, also, was remarkable, which was, that a person of the appearance and seeming wealth of the Abbé de Castelneau should choose that quarter of the city; for, although the houses in the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg were far better than in the vicinity of the Palais Royal, yet fashion said that the latter were to be preferred; and therefore two rooms and an antechamber in the Rue St. Honoré cost double the sum of a mansion near the Luxembourg.

Nevertheless, Pierre Morin and his wife, although the good artisan was aware of all these particulars, marched steadily up the stairs, and stopping at a door on the second floor, knocked boldly for admission. A lackey in a grey livery let them in, and with scarcely a word of inquiry conducted them to the presence of his master, who was seated, as was the custom in those days, in his bedchamber.

When they entered the room, the abbé raised his calm quiet eyes towards them, without the slightest expression either of pleasure or surprise.

“ Well, my friend,” he said, “ I learn your determination from seeing the child; but you should have given me notice. I am not quite prepared.”

He advanced as he spoke, and caressed the little girl, who seemed in no degree dismayed by the face of the stranger; but, on the contrary, laughed with infant glee at the sight of his dazzling white teeth, which were displayed somewhat more than usual as he played with the young being before him; and, at length, when he took her in his arms, though he held her with no very dexterous hand, she showed no sign of fear, but looked happy and contented. The abbé smiled with a brighter expression of countenance than usual, saying at the same time, “ Perhaps it may be so ! ”

What he meant, neither Pierre Morin nor his wife understood; but there was much shrewd common sense in the breast of the artisan; and

after suffering the abbé to amuse himself with the child for a minute, he said, "We have brought her here, sir, at your request, and though we may grieve to part with her, we will leave her to your care, upon one condition."

"Ha!" said the abbé—"a condition! what may that be?"

"Only this, sir," answered Pierre Morin, "that you shall promise me in writing to breed her up well and honourably, and to give her a marriage-portion according to the state in which you place her."

The abbé smiled with one of his cold calm looks, and replied, "You are a philosopher, my friend; but what you ask is right and just, and I will content you. Can you write?"

"Oh yes, sir," replied the man: "I who live in the garret can write better than some that live lower."

"Well, then," answered the abbé, "go to that table, and put down exactly what you wish me to promise, while I talk to your wife about what is needful for the child herself."

The artisan did as he was bid; and the abbé made many an inquiry of good Margiette, which showed that he had thought much on all the points connected with the new task he was about to undertake. The clothing, the food, the habits of the child were all investigated; and after speaking for some time to the artisan's wife, he called to his servant, and bade him seek a person whom he called Donnine.

By the time he had given this order, the filigree-worker had completed his task, and the abbé read the paper he had drawn up with a smile. "That will scarcely do," he said, "but I will put it in other language;" and he then wrote down, "I, Ferdinand de Castelneau, acknowledge having received from the hands of Pierre Morin his daughter ———, for the purpose of educating her as I would my own child; and I promise him hereby to give her as honourable and good an education, and as ample a dowry when she marries, as if she were in reality and truth my own daughter. — What is her name?" demanded the abbé, when he had concluded writing.

“Annette, sir,” replied the artisan, “Annette — her name is Annette.”

The abbé then filled up the blank which had been left in the paper, and handed it to Pierre Morin, asking if it met his views. The artisan read it carefully, and expressed himself satisfied; but added, “You will let us see her sometimes, sir?”

“I will never refuse you when you apply,” replied the abbé; “but, of course, your applications will not be too often. Your regard for her will best show itself both in suffering me to think of her as if she were my own child, and in allowing her to think of me as if I were her father.”

As he spoke, the servant in grey entered the room again, bringing with him an extremely neat and respectable-looking woman, apparently somewhat past her fiftieth year. The abbé held up his finger to Pierre Morin, and made a similar sign to his wife, saying, “Not a word! — This is the child I spoke of, Donnine. Take her from this good woman: you are

hereafter her *bonne*. Shew her all kindness, and try to make her happy."

"Oh, that I will, right soon," replied the good woman, who was a gay little withered Picard. "I will make her happy enough. — Come to me, my darling!"

Thus saying, she took the little girl from the arms of poor Margiette, who kissed the child again and again, and could not refrain from a natural tear or two. The abbé then signed the paper he had written, and gave it to the artisan, whom he beckoned into the antechamber with his wife, and then offered them some money. The man put it away, however, with the back of his hand, saying, in a tone of indignation, "I do not sell the child, sir!" He then walked towards the door, paused for a moment, called to his wife to come — for she had lingered to say a word or two more — and then left the abbé with his new charge.

CHAP. III.

THE scene which we have just contemplated took place on Monday the 20th of March, in the year we have mentioned. As soon as the filigree-worker and his wife had left the apartment, the Abbé de Castelneau returned to the room in which he had left the child with the good woman Donnine. They both gazed into the face of the child for a moment or two in silence, and then the abbé inquired, "What think you, Donnine?"

"I do not know what to think, my son," replied the good nurse; "but I am sure whatever you do is right." However, lest there should arise any doubt in the reader's mind as to who Donnine was, from the fact of her calling the abbé "my son," we shall proceed to explain a little more of her history.

In her very early youth Donnine had been

soubrette of the Abbé de Castelneau's mother, and was really a good and excellent girl. The lady, not long after her marriage into the family of Castelneau, had promoted an union between her pretty attendant Donnine and the old *sommelier*, or butler, of her husband's elder brother, the Count de Castelneau. The butler unadvisedly left the family of his master, in the hope of making a fortune in the good city of Paris. Those were the days of the regency and of mad speculations. The poor butler with his little wealth got entangled with the financiers and gamblers of the capital, ruined himself and his family, and to avoid misery in one world flew to meet the judgment of another. Poor Donnine, left penniless, and with a prospect of soon having another to support as well as herself, sought out her former mistress in the south, and was treated by Madame de Castelneau with very great kindness, that lady being then, like herself, on the very eve of child-birth. The infant to which Donnine gave birth expired within a few hours after its eyes had first opened upon the light of this world,

while the son which was born to her mistress proved strong and healthy; and Donnine once more entered the family in which she had been first received as a servant, returning to it in the humbler, though more important, post of a wet-nurse. Thus the Abbé de Castelneau was, in fact, her foster-son; and whatever might be his faults or errors, and they were, alas! very many, to her he had always shown undeviating kindness, and in good fortune or evil fortune — for very many vicissitudes had befallen him — he had always retained Donnine in his household, and had always attended to her wants and wishes.

She, too, on her part, combined, in her regard for her foster-son, all the affection of a mother, and the admiration of an attached dependant. She was by no means without good sense, quickness, and activity of thought. On all ordinary occasions she could judge of right and wrong as acutely as any one; but the moment the Abbé de Castelneau was interested, a sort of film seemed to fall over her eyes, which prevented her viewing objects in their natural

light, and every thing that he did seemed to be excellent, admirable, and just.

The child very soon began to find that she was in the hands of strangers, and that those she loved had left her. A few tears were shed, but she was speedily soothed; and being of a gay sweet disposition, with full health, and with no corporeal irritation, the drops were ere long dried again, and, laid upon the floor, she amused herself for nearly an hour by clutching at a cross and rosary which the abbé placed just beyond her reach. It was a curious sight to see,—the beautiful child thus engaged, and displaying a thousand infant graces in her efforts to reach the object before her, and the calm thoughtful man, with his full grave eyes, watching her with a look of interest such as he seldom displayed, and every now and then bursting into unwonted laughter, as he drew the rosary a little farther away, just at the moment she was about to seize it.

During all this time, the child and the abbé were left alone together; for after a brief consultation between him and Donnine, the nurse

had gone forth to seek other and better clothing for the child, that which had been brought by the filigree-worker's wife being somewhat scanty in quantity, and very anomalous indeed in quality. Some of the articles of her dress were as coarse as it was possible to see; but it is to be remarked, that these were chiefly the outward garments, for the inner ones were fine and costly.

We must follow the good woman, however, to the place where such objects as she then wanted were to be found more readily than any where else in the French capital. Strange as it may seem, this was at the place of public execution in the city of Paris, called the Place de Grève; but it must be remarked that no legal slaughter was permitted to take place there on Monday: and on that day was held, every week, a general sort of fair, called the Foire du Saint Esprit, where every article of clothing — in general second-hand, but sometimes also new — was to be found spread out for purchase, in the very spot where the bloody arm of the law at other times exercised its

power. I cannot better describe this curious scene than in the words of an author who lived in those very days, and who, speaking of this place, says, “ There the wives of the lesser shopkeepers, and other very economical women, go to buy their caps, gowns, cassocks, and even shoes, ready made. There, too, the informers look out for the pickpockets and the inferior sorts of thieves who come thither to sell the handkerchiefs, napkins, and other things they have stolen. These men are there apprehended, as well as those who come to that place itself with similar views of plunder; for it would seem that even that spot (the Place de Grève) is not capable of inspiring them with any very prudent reflections. One would imagine that this fair was the feminine stripping of a whole province, or the pillage of a nation of Amazons. Petticoats, bustles, dressing-gowns, are scattered about in piles, from which one may choose at leisure; and here the robe of a president’s wife is bought by a procuress, and a *grisette* puts on the cap of a marchioness’s waiting-woman. Here they absolutely dress themselves

in public, and we shall soon see them changing their under garments in this place. The buyer neither knows nor cares whence come the stays for which she bargains; and the most innocent poor girl, even under her mother's eye, puts on those in which, on the preceding evening, danced the licentious woman of the opera. Every thing seems purified by the sale, or by the inventory taken after death! As it is women who buy here and women who sell, the sharpness is pretty equal on both sides, and one hears afar the contention of eager and discordant voices. Viewed near, the scene is more curious still; for when women contemplate female decorations, there is something very peculiar to be seen in the physiognomy. In the evening all this mass of goods and chattels is carried away as if by enchantment, and there remains not a rag. But this inexhaustible magazine will reappear on Monday next, without fail."

In the great republic of the *Foire du Saint Esprit*, there were various grades and classes, some stalls much superior and more aristocratic

than others, some who directed and some who followed their guidance, as was the case of the republic of ancient Rome, and with every other republic that ever was or ever will be; for, alack and a well a day, what is the senator but the peer? — what consuls, dictators, presidents, but kings — only that, as poor Ophelia has it, they “wear their rue with a difference?” All things must have their grades — all lands must see some rule, and others obey — all people divide themselves into those who follow, and those who lead. It is but, in general, a difference of the duration of command; and whether it be that each individual holds his station by the month or the year, or the seventy years, or only for a day, as was the case in the Foire du Saint Esprit, matters but little, surely, when life itself is but an hour. It is wonderful what vast changes we make in names, while realities continue the same.

To return, however, from such digression, there were, as I have said, various classes amongst the booths, and an aristocracy even

in the sellers of old clothes. It was to one of the most dignified, then, of the saleswomen, who, with a cap as white as snow, a gown of taffetas unsoiled, and not ruffled, and beautiful dimity pockets pendant on either side, that the good nurse Donnine addressed herself for the purchase of all the little articles of clothing which were required for the child Annette. There was much chaffering and bargaining; and the woman failed not to declare to her customer that not one of the articles which she sold her, had ever been worn by any one. This thing had been made for the wife of a counsellor, whose child had been still-born; that had been expressly ordered by the capricious Marquise of —, who, when she saw it, changed her mind, and would not have it; the other had been destined for the child of the great banker, but had been found somewhat too small.

“ And that beautiful gown of brocade,” said Donnine, pointing to one which the saleswoman kept near her, as if she were afraid of its touch-

ing any thing else — “ what is the price of that ? ”

“ Ah ! my good woman,” replied the other, shaking her head, “ that’s for no one but the mistress of a financier, or for one of our great actresses to perform the part of Esther or Judith in, I can warrant you. Why, I paid three louis and a half for that gown this morning. The *femme-de-chambre* told me that it was made for Mademoiselle D’Argencerre when she was going to be married to the young Count of Castelneau, the old count’s son, you know, and it has never been worn.”

“ Why, how did that fall out ? ” demanded Donnine.

“ Why, the two fathers quarrelled,” said the other, “ upon some old grudge ; and the young count was sent away to join the army on the Rhine, and was killed but ten days after he arrived.”

“ Well, for all that,” said Donnine, “ I would not have sold my wedding gown if I had been the lady.”

“ Ay, but she took on and died,” replied the saleswoman ; “ and the clothes then, of course, fell to her maid.”

To this last speech Donnine made no reply ; but gathering up what she had bought into a small bundle, she paid for the whole, and walked away, but did not proceed immediately to the house from which she had come. On the contrary, indeed, she turned her steps in a direction the most opposite, and, passing the Palais Royal, took her way through a street which has since changed its name more than once. It was then called the Rue de Boutteville ; and about half way up was a large house, with a man dressed in somewhat of a military costume, but in clothes which denoted deep mourning, standing under the arch of the *porte cochère*. Over his shoulder he wore an immense, broad belt, which was fringed with black, and in it hung a peculiar sort of sword, only worn by that class of people who acted the part of porters at the doors of gentlemen’s houses in Paris, and were known by the name of Swiss,

let them come from what country they would. In his hand, the person we have mentioned — who was a portly man, with large limbs and rounded stomach — bore a tall ebony staff of great thickness, and with a gilded globe at the top, which now, however, was covered with black crape. As he saw Donnine approach, his face relaxed from its solemnity into a half smile, and he pulled off his cocked hat with great politeness.

“ Ah ! monsieur,” said Donnine, pausing for a moment near the door, “ I have heard the sad news ! So mademoiselle is dead, poor thing ! ”

“ Alas ! yes, madam,” replied the Swiss, in a tone of lamentation. “ She was a sweet young lady. We buried her yesterday morning, poor thing ! and a fine sight it was to see. We came away directly after the funeral, for my lord and my other young lady could not bear the château afterwards. — But here come some of the servants, and I must not be seen speaking to any of your family, you know,

however I may personally regret that such disunion should prevail.”

With this solemn and courteous sentence, the porter drew himself somewhat back ; and Donnine, making him a courtesy, which he returned by a profound bow, proceeded on her way, and took the first turning that led towards the Luxembourg.

CHAP. IV.

WE must now return for a short space of time to our filigree-worker ; and, though we do not trace step by step the progress of Pierre Morin through the course of the day which commenced by his visit to the Abbé de Castelneau, we may say that, to him, it was a day of bustle and anxiety, that he was absent from his home during the greater part of the morning, and that consequently he had scarcely any time to labour on the basket, in constructing which we have seen him interrupted in the first chapter of this work. At night he resumed his labours ; but, as may be well supposed, all the fatigue he had undergone during that day and those which preceded it, rendered repose absolutely necessary. He grew dull and heavy : the fine working of the silver required attention and care ; and, after making several vain efforts to overcome the

sleepiness that had fallen upon him, he abandoned the task and went to bed.

On the following morning early, the fligree-worker proceeded with quick steps to the house of the Abbé de Castelneau. Every thing externally bore the same appearance as the day before. The door at the bottom of the stairs was open; and, without stopping to make any inquiries at a small glass-covered apartment shaded by a green curtain, behind which no Parisian eye could doubt the person of a porter was to be found, Pierre Morin ran up the stairs with a quick step, but stood stupified when he beheld a large board hung across the door of the abbé's apartments, and, written thereon, the significant intimation, "*Chambres garnies à louer. Parlez au portier.*"*

Still Pierre Morin would not suffer himself to be convinced that the abbé was actually gone. He rang the bell that hung beside the door of the apartment, and knocked once or twice violently with his hand. No answer was

* Meaning, "Furnished apartments to let. Inquire of the porter."

returned, unless it were the hollow echoes of his own blows, which replied, plainly enough, "Here is nothing but emptiness." He then went down and made application at the glass door we have mentioned, demanding where was the Abbé de Castelneau. The porter replied, dryly, that he did not know : how should he ?

"Is he gone, then ?" demanded the filigree-worker.

"To be sure," answered the porter : "he went yesterday evening about three o'clock. He only had the apartments for a week."

The face of Pierre Morin fell as he heard this intelligence ; and though by various questions he endeavoured to obtain farther information, all that he could ascertain was, that the abbé had apparently gone into the country, having taken his departure in a *chaise de poste*, the driver of which seemed to know in what direction he was to turn his horses' heads without being told. With this unsatisfactory intelligence, the filigree-worker turned upon his way ; but it was an hour or two after this period ere he re-entered his own chamber.

He there, however, held a long conference with his wife as to all that had taken place, before he proceeded to resume his work ; and yet both seemed better satisfied than might have been expected under such circumstances, doubtless trusting that the child would be well taken care of, though it had been removed in a somewhat strange and suspicious manner. The labour on the basket was then recommenced, and during this night Pierre Morin worked at it without intermission.

It was about five o'clock in the morning when he finished it ; and just as he was putting the last concluding touch to the work, the rolling sound of rapid wheels rushing into the courtyard of the house, whose highest and most miserable story the artisan tenanted, told that some gay votary of pleasure and fashion was returning, probably from scenes of vice as well as dissipation, at the hour when the children of industry and want were rising from their hard couch, to begin the heavy passing of a day of toil. It was common in those times for many of the best and most splendid mansions in Paris

to be divided amongst all the classes of society, though the arrangement of the tenants, indeed, was very different from that which existed in the social world. Lowest of all, we are told, except the rats and bottles that occupied the cellars, generally lived the proprietor of the house. He might be some avaricious or some decayed nobleman, whose health, purse, or inclination rendered him unwilling to climb even a single flight of stairs. Then came the gay, the luxurious, the fashionable, the man of the court, and of society, inhabiting the wide and lofty rooms of the first floor. The *entresol* above gave accommodation to the smart young secretary of some public office, some foreign baron, or some of the numerous counts and princes that swarm in German and Italian courts. The second floor received the respectable merchant or banker, who had his offices and business in another part of the city; the widow lady, possessing affluence, but not riches; and all that numerous class, by no means the least happy or the least estimable, who are known by the name of *very respectable persons*. Above that, again, on the third,

came the highest grade of men of letters, the academician, the celebrated professor, the philosopher in vogue, the great artist. On the fourth — for there was a fourth, ay, reader, and a fifth, and a sixth also — were people still at ease, and possessing all the necessities of life; but possessing them not only with the slight inconvenience of daily climbing up long flights of stairs, but often with the serious anxiety of providing for children, for whom fortune had assigned no fund but the labour of a parent. Above these, again, came the poor artist, struggling forward with zeal and industry to make his merit known. The deep-thinking man of science, the result of whose investigations made or saved the fortunes of thousands, without giving him a sou; the moralist, the teacher, the man of letters, who disdained to pander to the bad taste of a licentious public, or to employ the arts of the quack to gain fame, or wealth, or honours. Above these, again, was want, and misery, and destitution, the never-ceasing toil of all the various artists and artisans, the productions of whose hands orna-

mented the palace, the church, and the saloon; such men, in short, as our filigree-worker, who were brought too closely in contact with the dwellings of wealth, luxury, and vice, not to feel an additional pang, amidst all the miseries of their own station, and to murmur at that social arrangement which allotted to them the whole of the dark side of life, and gave to beings, often less worthy, all that was bright and sunny.

The vices of the higher class of the Parisian people, their intemperance, their debauchery, their infidelity, their contemptible frivolity, were all indulged, enacted, and displayed, under the very same roofs, where dwelt misery, penury, and labour — and yet they wondered that there came a revolution !

Oh ! would but man remember that he is but a steward of all that he possesses ; that his wealth, his honours, his talents, his genius, his influence, are all merely lent to him by the one great Possessor, not alone for his individual benefit, but for the benefit of the whole ; — would he but remember this, such

terrible accounts of the stewardship would not be taken as are often demanded on this earth by agents that seem little likely to be intrusted with such a commission; and the after-reckoning, too, might be looked for in peace, knowing that it is to be rendered to a mild and merciful Lord.

The filigree-worker cast himself down upon his bed, saying with a smile, "Others have come home to sleep, why should I not rest also?" But though he did take a few hours' repose, he was up and away long before the fevered gamester, whose wheels he had heard, entertained any thought of stirring from his restless couch.

The part of the world, however, towards which Pierre Morin now bent his steps, was all busy and stirring with a multitude of people, some animated alone by the hope of gaining that honest daily bread which in those days was with very great difficulty acquired by the lower orders of the Parisian people, but many others instigated by the dark spirit of that most degrading of all demons, Mammon, to rob the

rich of their wealth, and the poor of their labour.

Not far from the great church of Nôtre Dame, somewhat behind it, but still a little to the right of that building, is a narrow street which has suffered little variation, except inasmuch as the shops, with which it was filled at the time I speak of, are now very much fewer in number than they then were, and are almost entirely devoted to the sale of such ornaments and utensils as are generally appropriated to the church. Sacramental cups and salvers, crosses of all kinds, even the pastoral crook of the bishop, and the pix itself, are still there displayed; but at the period of my story, every article worked in gold or silver was there to be found; and multitudes of trinkets of all kinds were ranged in the shop-windows, all along a street, every house of which was then the property of a goldsmith or a jeweller. At the corner of this street, in the best and largest shop that it contained, where one might just catch a view of solemn Nôtre Dame, rising blue and airy over the neighbouring houses, might be seen

daily old Gaultier Fiteau, the famous jeweller, goldsmith, and money changer. He was notorious for wealth, avarice, unscrupulous roguery, and the most delicate and tasteful goldsmith's work in Paris. He was of a harsh and a sour disposition, also, to all who came under his rod, pitiless to the poor, but submissive with the rich, and grasping and eager with all men. He was capricious, too, and would sometimes do a good action as if merely for a change; and the only permanent habit which bore the appearance of virtue in him was that of occasionally endeavouring to interest the rich in favour of the poor, and thus, as it were, to give alms by deputy. It was reported, however, that it was dangerous to trust Monsieur Fiteau with any donation for another, there being a certain oblivious power in his brain, which made him forget to give away any thing that he had once received, and, even when reminded of it, enabled him not to recollect the exact amount.

It was to his shop, then, that Pierre Morin now hastened, bearing the basket which he

had completed during the preceding night. The little shrivelled old man, the ugliness of whose countenance was only increased by an immense bear-skin cap, received the poor filigree-worker with an angry and malevolent scowl. Much was the abuse he poured on the head of the artisan, for the time which he had occupied in producing the basket. He called him an idle and good-for-nothing fellow; declared that he would be brought to beggary by his laziness; and dwelt upon the idea of good Pierre Morin being reduced to utter starvation with the tone and manner of one who would receive from such a sight the utmost glee and satisfaction.

Pierre, who had a large fund of good humour, bore all that the goldsmith said with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity; but when Fiteau asked him, or rather commanded him, to produce another basket exactly similar to the one he brought, in the space of three days, the good artisan, remembering his promise to the Abbé de Castelneau, and that he had received some part of the money in advance, declared that he could not do it, assigning the

true reason, that he had such another trinket to finish for a gentleman who had bespoke it.

This reply enraged the goldsmith to the highest possible degree, not so much because he wanted the basket soon, as because he was made indignant and apprehensive by the very thought of a mere artisan getting any larger share of profit than he chose to assign. He stormed, he raved, he grinned, and he declared that unless Pierre abandoned the work altogether, he would never employ him again, even if he were starving.

Pierre remained firm, however, and thus they parted, the artisan resolving to do nothing else till he had prepared the basket for the abbé, in case it should be required. The abbé did not appear, however, and the basket remained on the filigree-worker's hands. Nevertheless, though it seems strange to say, he contrived to support himself well for nearly a month, without having recourse to Monsieur Fiteau; but the secret was this, that the nobleman on whose estates he was born, and who, seeing him a clever and intelligent youth, had paid the ex-

penses of his education, and enabled him to learn the trade at which he now laboured, chanced to be at Paris about this time; and Pierre having presented himself at his patron's house, though he never mentioned or even hinted at his poverty either to the gentleman himself or his only surviving daughter, received from each of them a present, which enabled him and his wife to live for the time we have stated with all the careless gaiety of French peasants, enjoying the sunshine of the present hour to the very full, and not giving even a thought to the clouds of to-morrow. At the end of the month, however, poverty began daily to present herself under her most painful aspect; and the filigree-worker, had he been one of those who are inclined frequently to ask for assistance, which indeed he was not, could not have obtained it in the same quarter, for the nobleman who had befriended him, and his daughter, had left Paris for a distant part of France ten days before.

He sat, then, one evening in April, fireless, supperless, and penniless; and after first gazing

in his wife's face with a melancholy look for some time, and then down upon the uncovered table, he started up, exclaiming in a gay tone, "Diable ! I will go to old Fiteau !"

Margiette did not try to dissuade him, though she very much feared that his application would prove vain ; and, tossing on his hat with a light step, the buoyancy of which no poverty could take away, good Pierre Morin proceeded rapidly to the shop of Fiteau, which he feared might be closed before he arrived.

He found the usurious old goldsmith bustling about in his shop, putting away this article and that, and winding up all his affairs for the night. One half of the shop, which looked towards Nôtre Dame, was closed, and the other partly so, though two or three of the heavy iron-bound shutters were still down, in order that the nice calculator of expenses might not be obliged to light his lamp so long as there was one ray of light left in the sky. A boy of about fourteen years of age, the only assistant of any kind that he kept, and who served for clerk, shopman, porter, and every thing else,

was aiding his master to the best of his abilities, while a low irritable growl on the part of Fiteau showed that the lad's most zealous exertions were not successful in satisfying his master.

As soon as Pierre Morin entered the shop, Fiteau began upon him in a sharp tone, exclaiming, "Ah! you idle scapegrace, I thought you would soon make your appearance again, expecting me to employ and assist you, when I have lost more money by your laziness than enough. Here, if you had been working for me, you might have gained half a louis between this time and twelve to-morrow. Here is a gold filigree bracelet to be made for the old Marquise de Pompignan, who goes to Versailles at one o'clock to-morrow, and will not wait a minute."

"Well, give me the wire," said Pierre Morin, "and I will do it before then. It is a mere nothing to work a bracelet: there is not half the labour in it that there is in a basket, such as I wrought last."

"I will not trust you, I will not trust you," replied the goldsmith, "you good-for-nothing

fellow. I am just going to send the boy to your companion Launoy, to tell him to come hither and do it. I will not trust you either with the gold or in regard to the time."

The assertion in regard to Launoy, indeed, was altogether false; for that workman had not quitted the shop ten minutes before, loaded with more work than he could possibly accomplish in the time allowed him. All the other workmen usually employed by old Fiteau were also fully occupied; and the thought of losing the order for the bracelet had been lying very heavy at the old miser's heart, when the appearance of Pierre Morin had given him a hope of seeing the work accomplished. Knowing, however, that the good lady for whom it was intended was of a tenacious and irritable disposition, he determined to find some means of guarding against any sort of idleness on the part of the filigree-worker, and he consequently took good care not to show his satisfaction at seeing him again, but continued to abuse him as bitterly as ever.

"I do not want to take the work from

Launoy," said Pierre Morin, "if he wants it."

"Oh, no, no," interrupted the old goldsmith, fearful of overacting his part — "he does not want it: he has plenty of work every day in the week; but it is, that I cannot and will not trust to you, you idle vagabond — But come, I will tell you what I will do," he continued after a moment's pause. "Out of pure compassion, and for no other reason in the world, I will give you the work, if you will stay here and do it, and never go out of the little work-room there, till it is done."

"And I am to have half a louis when it is done," said the filigree-worker. "Is that to be the bargain?"

"Nay, nay, I said eight livres," replied the goldsmith: "half a louis is too much."

"Not a whit for gold work," said the filigree-worker, who began to perceive that old Fiteau was somewhat more eager in the business than he pretended to be. "I will have that, or I will go elsewhere. It was what you offered at first, Master Fiteau."

“ Well, well, you shall have it,” replied the usurer. “ Get you in, get you in, and I will lock the door upon you to guard you against your own bad inclinations — keep you out of temptation. — Ha, ha, ha !”

“ Why, you do not suppose that I would steal all these things of yours, if you left me here all night ?” demanded Pierre Morin, pointing to the jewellery scattered round.

“ I don’t know, I don’t know,” answered the goldsmith. “ Pretty things to look at, Master Morin — very tempting things — very tempting. I do not know that I might not steal them myself, if they were not my own. — Safe bind safe find, Master Morin — safe bind safe find. I never leave any one in my shop when I am out of it. Here is an ounce of wire, and half a pennyweight of Venice gold — but where is the blow-pipe ? Oh, here it is in this drawer : the rest of the tools you will find there, and a lamp ; there is some charcoal, too, and some crucibles.”

Pierre Morin listened with a quiet smile till the old man had done ; he then answered, how-

ever, "All very good, Master Fiteau; but I must go home and tell my wife before I begin. Why, she would be looking for me in the Morne * to-morrow morning."

"Nonsense, nonsense," replied the goldsmith: "do you pretend to say that you never stay out at night without her knowing where you are?"

"Never, upon my life," replied Pierre Morin; "never since we were married to this hour, and that is six years ago, come the Saturday before Martinmas. I promised her I never would, and I always keep my word, Master Fiteau."

"Except when you have work in hand, scapegrace," cried the miser, with a laugh. "But get you in, get you in. I will send the

* The place now called the Morgue was known by this more appropriate name in those days. It may be as well to state, for the benefit of persons not thoroughly acquainted with the topography of Paris, that it is the place where are exposed the corpses of unknown persons found dead, in order that they may be identified by their friends and relations. The writer of these pages has been in it several times, and seldom found it untenanted.

boy to tell your wife where you are. He has some twenty errands to do in the town, and has got to take up a crucifix and two rosaries to a house in the Rue Montmartre, so that he goes by your door."

"Then you must send her a livre to get her some supper, Master Fiteau," said the filigree-worker: "she will want some comfort if I am not there."

It was with considerable difficulty that Monsieur Fiteau was induced to agree to this part of the bargain; but Pierre Morin saw that he had the advantage of his avaricious employer, and he would not go into his place of labour till he had seen the old goldsmith give the livre into the hands of the boy, and had made the boy promise to deliver it the first thing, assuring him that he would skin him alive if he did not keep his word. He then whistled a few bars of the last song which had been produced upon the Pont Neuf—my French readers will understand what I mean—and walked before the goldsmith, through a little back parlour, where Fiteau took his meals

during the day, (for he slept in another part of the town, and possessed no portion of this house but the ground-floor,) into a small confined workshop, where was a little furnace well supplied with crucibles, and a table covered with various lamps and manifold kinds of tools. There was some little dispute between Fiteau and his workman as to the quantity of oil and coal that was necessary ; but this being settled, Pierre Morin addressed himself seriously to his work, and Fiteau, creeping out of the room with his usual quiet and stealthy pace, was heard to lock the door behind him, as if he had been the gaoler of a prison.

Pierre Morin went on with the bracelet ; but presently finding the room too hot, he jumped upon a table and opened a small high window of about a foot square. He then returned to his work ; and with the happy art of abstracting his thoughts from all subjects but that which was immediately before him, he gave himself up to the enjoyment which always proceeds from the practice of an art in which we are skilful, and for which we have a taste.

He was thus deep in the admiration of all the lines and figures he was working in the gold wire, when a sound struck his ear which made him pause for a moment. He resumed his work instantly, for he knew there was no time to spare, but he had scarcely taken another turn when he again listened — started up with a look of surprise and horror — looked to the door — recollected it was fastened — gazed up to the window — saw that it was barred — and then, seizing one of the instruments from the table, darted quickly to the other side of the room and put his hand on the lock.

CHAP. V.

LET the reader call to mind the description which we have given of the premises occupied by the goldsmith. There was the outer shop, with a long counter on either side, and a narrow passage between these two: behind that again was the inner shop, or little parlour, and from it, through a small door, one entered the workshop, into which Gaultier Fiteau had locked the filigree-worker. All these rooms, except the shop, had windows so strongly barred that no human power could find the way in or out, except by the legitimate entrance; and the shop itself, open during the day, was secured at night by shutters covered with plates of iron. It may be remembered, that when Fiteau shut up the filigree-worker in the inner room, these shutters were principally closed. Two or three, however, were still down at that time; and before the goldsmith suffered his boy to depart

upon the numerous errands he had to perform, he made him aid in putting up these cumbrous defences, and fastened them tightly on the inside. The door of the shop did not bear the dignified decoration of plate glass, or any of those appearances by which shop-doors at present are distinguished from other doors, but was made of solid oak, studded and bound with iron, like the doors of a prison ; and strong must have been the hand, or cunning the device, which got it open when once it was closed.

As soon as the goldsmith had seen the shutters completely up, he found his way, by the faint light which came in through the still open door, to some small sparks of fire that were glimmering on the hearth in the other room ; and, lighting a lamp, gathered together all the various articles which the boy was to carry to their several destinations, put them into a closely covered basket, hung it on the lad's arm, and despatched him on his way, while he himself bustled about his counters and drawers, placing every thing in order, and all under lock and key.

When the boy issued forth into the street, knowing well the goldsmith's habits and character, he took care to close with scrupulous exactness the door of the shop behind him, and then, safe from watchful eyes, he paused, looking round him on all sides, and enjoying the first moment of idle relaxation and freedom from the sharp superintendence of a careful and somewhat scolding master.

It was the twilight of an April evening : there was a calm bluish shade in the air which spoke of repose and peace ; the busy labours of the Parisian world were all over ; and as the boy looked up the street and down the street, calculating which would be the best and most amusing way to go — though in fact there was little difference between them — he beheld not a creature either to the right hand or to the left, and heard not a sound but distant murmurs from other parts of the city, and the clock of Nôtre Dame striking seven. The momentary pause which he made, however, brought a group of three people into the street on the

left hand; and although there could be very little matter in their appearance to excite the lad's curiosity, yet he turned in that direction as soon as he saw them, and must have passed close by them, had they not slowly crossed over the way in earnest conversation as they came near. The shadiness of the street, and the dark hue of the evening hour, prevented the boy from seeing as clearly who or what they were as he could have wished to do; for he was naturally of an inquiring disposition. One thing he did remark, that they seemed to be three gentlemen of good mien and apparel; and, after giving them a steady and inquisitive glance, the boy passed on. He stopped at the nearest corner, however, to look back; but after a moment's halt went forward again, and soon reached the more thronged and gayer part of Paris, where, by pausing to gaze at every thing that attracted his attention, stopping to talk with this person and with that, and employing with considerable success all those means which boys about his age generally use for getting rid of the great adversary, Time, he contrived to

loiter away the moments till half-past nine o'clock of the same night.

In the mean time, old Fiteau soon brought the work of arrangement to a conclusion, and only remained in the shop to sum up, with his usual care, the loss and gain of the day, which he generally did upon a slate every evening, copying it into a large vellum-covered book the first thing on the following morning. This night, however, he was suddenly interrupted in the midst of his calculation by a noise, as if some one laid his hand on the lock of the outer door. The moment he heard it, the old man took a step forward from the other side of the shop with an eager look and trembling limbs, intending either to lock or bolt the door. But before he could effect that purpose, the entrance of the blue twilight showed him that it was too late. The appearance of a face that he knew the moment after, relieved his anxiety and apprehension, although the surprise and alarm which he had at first felt left his heart beating, and his hand still shaking.

“ Ah ! monsieur le chevalier,” he exclaimed, addressing the personage who entered, and who was a tall powerful man, with a pale, worn, and somewhat sinister countenance, — “ you surprised and startled me. Did you not know I never do any business after my door is shut ? Did the boy tell you I had not gone home ? ”

“ No, indeed,” replied the chevalier, who had been followed into the shop by another person somewhat less in size, but equally powerful in frame. “ We did not see your boy. If he be out, I suppose you have no one who could carry something home for me were I to buy it ? ”

“ Not I, not I,” replied the goldsmith somewhat impatiently. “ Good evening, count,” he added, bowing low to the other ; and then resuming his reply, he said, “ I have no one to send till to-morrow — besides, I never sell by lamp-light, and it is time for me to go home.”

“ If you never sell, do you buy, my dear Fiteau ? ” said the man whom he had called count, coming forward with a dull, unpleasant

smile, which had far more of sneering contempt in it than either courtesy or kindness.

“No, no,” replied Fiteau, “I neither buy nor sell at this time of night. Come, gentlemen, I must go home—I will talk to you by the way,” and he moved a little towards the door. But the other two remained still in the way, and the one called by Fiteau the count replied with the same cold smile, “No, no, my dear Fiteau, you must not go home till you have done what I want. I am hard pressed for a little money to-night, and you must give me a hundred louis for this snuff-box. You know it well, and the diamonds upon it. If the cards are lucky to-night, I will take it back from you to-morrow, and pay you twenty louis to boot.”

“I declare,” cried Fiteau, at the first impulse, “I have not a hundred louis in the place.” But the moment he had said it he repented; for there was a sort of haggard and ominous expression about the countenances of his two companions which gave him some vague alarm in regard to the consequences of offending them;

and he likewise knew that the snuff-box was worth much more than the sum required.

“That is a lie, Fiteau,” answered the count, the moment the other spoke; “for you know that you made the Abbé de Castelneau pay you five hundred louis not three hours since, whether he would or not, and well nigh ruined him, poor fellow.”

“I have paid money since, I have paid money since,” exclaimed Fiteau: “it was to discharge my own debts I made him pay his: — why did he change his lodging and hide himself?”

As he spoke, Fiteau remarked the eyes of his two visitors turn towards each other, with a look that he did not at all like; and after a moment’s pause, he added, “Well, well, I will see what I have got, I will see what I have got. I may have some ninety louis, if that will do. Let me have the box. The money is in that next room.”

The count gave him the box, and the old man turned with a hasty step towards the little parlour, feeling, if the truth must be told, not for the key of the chest in which his money was kept, but for the key of the room in which Pierre

Morin was at work. The moment he passed on thither, the two men who had entered his shop spoke a few rapid words to each other; the one saying, in a low tone, "Now, chevalier!" and the other replying, "No, you, you! — I will do the rest!"

"Shut the door, then!" cried the count; and, before the poor old goldsmith could reach the entrance of the workshop where Pierre Morin was locked in, a strong arm was thrown round him, a hand put over his mouth, the outer door of the shop closed, and the second villain was also upon him.

There is strength even in despair: the old man dropped the lamp which he carried, and which was instantly extinguished, got his mouth free for a moment, and gave a loud cry for help. Then finding that he could not liberate himself from the arm that held him, by a straightforward effort he slipped down in spite of that strong grasp, avoiding a blow that was aimed at his head by one of the assassins, which hit the other on the breast, and made him still farther relax his hold. All was now darkness, and, under

cover thereof, the wretched old man strove to escape to the street door, but he was instantly caught again. Then came the terrible struggle for life or death, the writhing, the striving, the loud and agonised cry, the dull muttered curse, the faint groan, the gasp of anguish and destruction. Both the assassins were upon the ground bending over him, so eager in the terrible deed they were performing, that they knew nothing, heard nothing, but the sounds created by themselves and their victim. Scarcely, however, had the last faint cry passed from the lips of the miserable man, when a sudden light burst into the room, and one of the murderers instinctively started up. Before he was prepared to resist, however, or to act in any way, a tall powerful man was upon him, and he was struck to the ground by the blow of a hammer. The chevalier was upon his feet in a moment, as soon as he saw his companion fall; and, dropping the knife, which was wet with the heart's blood of poor Fiteau, he drew his sword upon Pierre Morin, while the count struggled up again upon his knee. The artisan, unarmed and over-

matched, darted past them ; but he would not have escaped unhurt, had not the assassin, in lunging at him, stumbled over the prostrate body of the murdered man and fallen, dyeing himself in the gore with which the floor was covered.

Seizing the opportunity, Pierre Morin darted into the outer shop, banged to the door which separated it from the little parlour or counting-house ; and, though one of the villains pulled strongly from the inside, he succeeded, by a great effort, in keeping it closed with his left hand, till he had turned the key in the lock with his right.

When this was done, the good artisan put his hand to his brow to collect his bewildered thoughts, and then felt his way, with his brain whirling and his breast oppressed, to the door of the shop, which he opened, and went out into the air.

The moment that he stood beyond the threshold, a man wrapped in a dark cloak appeared beside him, demanding eagerly, “ What was that cry ? Was the old man there ? You have not killed him ? ” Scarcely were the words

uttered, when he seemed suddenly to perceive that he was speaking to a stranger, and darted away at full speed.

Pierre Morin stooped to pick something up from off the ground, and then instantly gave the alarm, shouting loudly for aid, and ringing all the bells of the houses round. A crowd was soon gathered; men and women, porters, lackeys, gentlemen, and merchants, poured forth from their houses, and listened with wondering ears to the tale of the artisan.

The shop of poor Gaultier Fiteau was surrounded by the crowd, and the lieutenant-general of police was sent for; but till he came, Pierre Morin could not prevail upon any one to enter the house, although he represented to the multitude that the old jeweller might not yet be dead: such was the feeling of awe which the population of Paris entertained at that time towards the police. Very speedily, however, the lieutenant-general appeared in person with manifold officers and flambeaux, and having heard the story of the artisan, he spoke a word or two to one of the persons who accompanied

him, and proceeded with his own hand to open the door of the house. A pause took place while the lieutenant, taking a torch in his hand, looked in, but all was vacant and as silent as the grave. The chief officer of police then advanced between the two counters, followed by the rest, without a word being said. He stopped a moment to gaze at a small dark stream of blood, which found its way out from underneath the door between the shop and the parlour, and muttered to himself, "Here is evidence of the deed."

He then unlocked the door and threw it open. The moment he did so, however, two men burst forth, and made a violent effort to break through. The lieutenant-general of police himself was knocked down, and some of those behind him recoiled. But the moment the count and the chevalier saw the exempts, their courage seemed to abandon them, and they were taken in a moment. On examining the room, it was found that the unfortunate goldsmith was quite dead; and—whether it was that the two men, supposing any persons who

came to apprehend them would be without lights, fancied they might escape better in the darkness, or whether, as some people imagined, the sight of their own deed was too horrible for them to bear — it is certain that they had put out the lamp which Pierre Morin had left lighted in the workshop, and had thus remained for a considerable length of time, it would appear, in the midst of darkness, with the body of him they had killed lying close beside them.

What had been their sensations? — what had been their thoughts during the interval? — Nobody has ever known; but it is evident that they had conferred together as soon as they had found that it was impossible to escape from the scene of their crime, and had arranged the story they were to tell, or rather the account they were to give of the event which had taken place.

As soon as the lieutenant-general of police had raised himself from the ground, on which he had been cast by the furious rush of the two criminals, he ordered them to be removed and kept separate; and at the same time, after

speaking a few words to one of his exempts, he nodded to Pierre Morin, saying, "I will talk with you farther, presently."

The good artisan was somewhat surprised to find the exempt take him by the arm and lead him away from the scene in which he thought that the information he had to give might be most particularly required. He was still more surprised, however, to find that he was to be carried to the house of the lieutenant, and shut up in a room by himself, with very little difference between him and the criminals against whom he was to bear witness.

The room in which he was placed, indeed, contained a bed; and for that luxury poor Pierre Morin would have been even more grateful than he was, if he had been thoroughly acquainted with all the transactions which, from time to time, took place in Paris under the paternal care of the police of the French metropolis.

CHAP. VI.

THE mind of the good filigree-worker was not one to be impressed easily with feelings of apprehension. He thought it very strange and very disagreeable that he who had given the first alarm, who had aided with such effect to seize the murderers, who was the only living witness, in fact, of the crime, should thus be detained in solitude, with the key of the door turned upon him.

With natural lightness of heart, however, he soon forgot the small evils of his situation; and after revolving for some time all the horrible images which the scenes of that night had presented to his eyes, he exclaimed "*Peste!*" three times, and having thus satisfied the goddess of wonder, he cast himself down upon the bed, and fell sound asleep. He was still quietly and happily slumbering, when the morning

light began to shine through the high window, and one of the agents of the police, entering without being heard, gazed at the sleeping artisan for a minute or two, as if to read on his countenance the secrets that might be in his bosom.

Nor is it at all improbable that such was really his intention, for every thing in that day was a matter of espionage throughout the whole city of Paris. The very thoughts of men were subjects of minute investigation by the government; and it was supposed that all things could be performed by the cunning inquisition of the police into the actions, ideas, and feelings of the citizens. Not the judge upon the bench — not the minister in his cabinet — not the prisoner in his dungeon — not the profligate in the lowest resorts of vice and iniquity — was without a spy nearer to him than he imagined, marking all and sometimes revealing all. In such circumstances, it may appear that no evil could be committed, no crime take place, unpunished; but yet both occurred every day. The mass of wickedness, vice, and folly, was

perhaps greater than at any other period, and in proportion very few offences were brought under the eye of the law.'

Two causes combined to produce this effect. In the first place, with an active and clever nation, art naturally met art; and, in the space of fifty or sixty years, the police had actually drilled and trained the people to outwit them on very many occasions. It might be perfectly well known to the lieutenant-general, that such and such a priest or abbé had been in this or that abode of licentiousness, and yet the lieutenant might have no idea of what criminal or treasonable meeting he had been at half an hour before or afterwards. In the next place, the honourable society of *mouchards*, as the spies were called in France, had its own particular rules and regulations, its own peculiar habits and prejudices — vested rights and privileges, which were very frequently extremely inconvenient and annoying to the officers above them. A certain portion of information they felt themselves bound to afford; but they would afford no more, unless they were either

very highly paid for it, or some special case was pointed out, in regard to which the police really wished to get accurate and complete information. The general mass of wickedness which they discovered, and indeed the particular instances of crime, either committed or meditated, were seldom, if ever, revealed unless some great object was to be gained; so that it is clearly ascertained, many a man has been allowed to go about Paris for three, four, five, or six years, when his life was entirely in the hands of six or seven infamous spies, whose views and purposes it did not suit to inform the police against him.

It sometimes happened that small or large bribes were given to procure this immunity; but, more frequently still, the reticence of the *mouchards* was not at all mercenary; for they were a philosophical race of men, and saw things in an extended point of view. They were, indeed, so fully and generally convinced of the necessity of crime and wickedness of all kinds for the encouragement of their trade, and for the extension of their emoluments, that

they would have been very sorry indeed to have given any serious discouragement to vice. They looked upon the world, in short, as a great orchard, where sins were produced for their benefit; and though they might gather the fruit, they would have been very sorry indeed to cut down the trees.

Let it be remembered, all this time, that I am speaking alone of the city of Paris, which — although the citizens looked upon it as “France,” and both in their speech and notions had a certain confusion of ideas upon the subject, which made them believe that Paris comprised every thing in the world, and that France was only a small quarter or portion of it — Let it be remembered, I say, that I am speaking alone of Paris, which was not, after all, the whole country. For a certain distance in the environs of the capital the influence of the French police and the system of espionage was felt. All the very large towns, too, of course, aped the metropolis in its public and its private vices; but there were wide tracts of country to which the system of espionage did not ex-

tend; and respecting which, as was afterwards lamentably proved, the French government possessed no information whatsoever, as far at least as regarded the wants and wishes, habits and character, of the people.

To return, however, from this long digression to good Pierre Morin and the agent of police. The latter — who had been originally a *mouchard*, and had afterwards been elevated to the dignity of an exempt, without losing his taste for the science to which he had originally addicted himself — having gazed, as we have said, for some time upon the countenance of the filigree-worker, and being satisfied by all he saw that the man was sleeping the sleep of innocence, pulled him by the arm and woke him with a sudden start. “Come, come, sir,” he said, “get up! the lieutenant of police wants to speak to you directly. You must come and tell what you know of this murder last night.”

Now every Parisian who was not a *mouchard* bore a vast share of hatred and enmity to all individuals of that class, and scarcely less to officers of police; and Pierre Morin, conse-

quently, was not at all disposed to hold any long conference with his companion. He shook himself in silence without feeling very much discomposed by having slept in his clothes, and followed to the especial apartments of the lieutenant-general of police, where he was detained some time in an antechamber without seeing that officer.

At length, however, he was summoned to the great man's presence, and found him sitting in his bed-room, robed in an embroidered dressing-gown, and eating various savoury ragouts as a preparation for the labours of the day. It may seem that such a place and such a time were not very fit to receive the deposition of a witness in a case of murder: but things were so done in Paris in those days; and the lieutenant of police thus lost no time in eating his chicken and his sweetbreads, drinking his burgundy and water, and questioning Pierre Morin with the most admirable perseverance and determination.

Although a lieutenant of police was always a very awful sort of personage in the eyes of the lower order of Parisians, and even of the higher

classes also, yet the good artisan was seldom without having all his wits about him; and he answered the questions which were asked of him with veracity, clearness, and precision. He told his tale not only truly but accurately; for though at first sight truth and accuracy may seem to be the same thing, yet in operation they are very different. Many a man who tells a story which is perfectly true is not believed, because he fails to put all things in their proper order, to add all the particulars which elucidate the facts and give the whole the air of verity. Pierre Morin, however, entered into all the details, informed the lieutenant of his visit on the preceding night to the unhappy man who had been murdered, related their conversation with so much point and truth that the officer himself smiled at the painting of the character of old Fiteau, which was well known in Paris; and the artisan then proceeded to tell how the goldsmith had locked him up in the room, in order that his work might be done by the time required.

“I know not well,” he continued, “how long I had been there, when I heard what I thought

a cry, which seemed suddenly stifled. I persuaded myself it was nothing, however, and went on; but I had scarcely given the pincers a turn when there was a terrible sound of struggling in the next room, and I heard the voice of old Fiteau, crying ‘ Help, help! murder, murder!’ There were bars upon all the windows, so there was no way to get out but by the door. As I knew that was locked, and it would take time to break the fastenings off, I snatched up one of the chasing chisels, and with it forced back the lock. When the door was open, I found the other room all dark, but the lamp I had been working with lighted it up in a minute. The first thing I saw was the poor old man upon the ground, with two men dressed like gentlemen on their knees over him; one squeezing his mouth and head down upon the floor with his hand, while the other seemed stabbing him with a knife. The minute I came in, one started up” —

“ Stay, stay,” said the lieutenant — “ you say stabbing him with a knife: their swords were not drawn, then?”

“No, no,” replied Pierre Morin, “there were no swords drawn at that time; not indeed till I had knocked the man down with my hammer, who first started up.”

“Where is the hammer?” demanded the lieutenant.

“Here,” answered Pierre Morin, taking it out of his pocket, and giving it to the officer, who held out his hand for it.

“Go on,” said the lieutenant, — “what happened next?”

“Why, then,” replied Pierre Morin, “the other, who was upon his feet by this time, rushed at me, drawing his sword; but poor old Fiteau helped me at that pinch, though he was as dead as Ste. Geneviève, for the scoundrel stumbled over him before he could run me through with his rapier. Thereupon I scrambled out of the door as fast as I could, and, banging it to, locked it upon them. They struggled hard to get it open, but they could not; though, if they had not been two fools, or else stupified by what they had done, they would have soon

picked the lock with all the tools that I left there. In the mean while I ran out of the shop and gave the alarm; and you yourself, monseigneur, know all the rest."

It will be remarked, in this account, that good Pierre Morin did not think fit to say one word — on the present occasion, at least — concerning the person whom he had seen on the outside of the door. It might be forgetfulness, it might be a certain feeling of compassion or good-nature which made him not wish to implicate a man, of whose guilt he had no certain proof, in so terrible an accusation. There was no necessity, it is true, of saying any thing more unasked, for as soon as he had given the mere details of the murder, the lieutenant of police began to question him in a closer manner.

"So," he said, "you intend me to believe all this?"

"Indeed I do, monseigneur," replied Pierre Morin; "and what's more, you do believe it, I can see very well: you are not the man to mistake between truth and falsehood when they are put before you, I am sure."

“Indeed,” said the lieutenant of police, with a sarcastic smile at the broad flattery which the peasantry of France are almost as ready to apply as the peasantry of Ireland, thinking it nothing more than common courtesy after all—“Indeed, you are certainly a man of genius, Monsieur Pierre Morin; and though you are clearly new to the trade, you have as much impudence as the oldest *filou* in Paris. You do not do great honour to my penetration, however, when you tell me this ridiculous story of the sordid old goldsmith leaving you on his premises all night, and of your consenting to remain shut up in a room till he chose to set you free in the morning.”

“If you will not believe that, monseigneur,” replied Pierre Morin, perfectly calmly, “pray tell me what you will believe?”

“Why, probably,” answered the lieutenant of police, “that you are yourself one of the accomplices, left in the outer shop while your two companions did the deed within; and that, alarmed by the old man’s cries, or by somebody coming, you shut the door upon the

others, and gave the alarm. It was a clever trick, I must own, and, as such, should not go without its reward. If you will confess the whole, then, and bear witness against these two friends of yours, you shall have a pardon yourself, and we may do something for you. No man ever makes so good an exempt as one who has been apprehended two or three times himself. What say you?"

"Oh, monseigneur, I will bear witness against the two willingly," replied Pierre Morin; "but there is another, a very honest fellow, whom I will not bear witness against, and his name is Pierre Morin."

The lieutenant of police seemed to be amused with the good artisan's quickness of retort; and being very well convinced that the other had nothing to do with the murder, he dropped the tone in which he had been speaking, and said, "Well, well, let us hear what you can really bear witness to?"

"To every thing I saw," replied Pierre Morin.

“Not so quick, not so quick,” cried the lieutenant: “what was the précise hour at which you went to the shop of old Fiteau?”

“I can’t exactly say to a minute,” replied the artisan, “for I neither looked at the clock nor heard it strike; but it was just that hour when the western sky is all red and gold, and the eastern is of a mouse colour.”

“That is to say, about half-past six,” said the lieutenant: “and pray what time did the boy go?”

Now although, as we have said, the criminal lieutenant was perfectly well convinced that Pierre Morin was innocent of any share of the murder, and, moreover, recollected that the artisan had said the boy was in the shop when Fiteau shut him up in the work-room, yet such was his habit of trying to entangle men in their talk, that he could not resist putting this question, simply to see what answer the filigree-worker would make.

“Just at seven o’clock,” replied the artisan at once, very much to the surprise of the lieutenant.

“Indeed!” said the officer: “pray, which way did he go?”

“That I can’t tell,” replied Pierre Morin, with a laugh — “I was shut up in the work-room, you know.”

“Then pray how can you tell at what hour he went?” demanded the officer.

“Because,” answered Pierre Morin, grinning at having puzzled the magistrate — “because I had jumped up on the table to open a bit of the small window, and I heard old Fiteau say to the boy, ‘Be quick, you sloth, be quick, and do not lose time by the way.’ Then, the moment the door was shut, the boy began a tune that I often heard him whistle before, but stopped when Nôtre Dame struck seven, because, I suppose, its song and his did not sound well together.”

The lieutenant-general smiled; for mental fencing was an art in which he took great delight, even when his opponent parried skilfully his attack. “Bring in the boy Pierre Jean,” he said to a clerk who was writing busily at a table not far off; and the obsequious and silent

noter down of other men's sayings and doings rose without a word, glided out of the room, and returned as quietly with poor Fiteau's errand boy. The youth was all aghast at the awful presence into which he was brought, and seemed just in that state in which a skilful cross-examiner can contrive to make a witness say any thing he pleases.

"Pray what were the last words your master said to you last night?" said the lieutenant-general of police. "Mark me, *the last* words he said to you?"

"He said — he said," replied the boy, looking first up to the ceiling and then down upon the floor — "he said, 'Carry that to Madame de Rohan's.' That's the last thing he said."

The lieutenant of police grinned; but before he could interpose, the filigree-worker had exclaimed, "What did he say to you outside the door, Pierre Jean?"

A look of intelligence came up into the boy's face at the sound of a familiar voice, and he replied at once, "Oh, he said then, 'Be quick, be quick, and do not lose time by the way;'

and he called me a sloth, too, though I always make as much haste as I can."

It was now Pierre Morin's turn to grin, and the boy having been sent out of the room, the lieutenant of police proceeded to interrogate the artisan upon various other points. The first of these was in reference to what he had done with the instrument employed in forcing back the lock. Next, he strongly and severely cross-examined him as to which of the murderers had the knife in his hand, and which was stifling the voice of the unfortunate goldsmith at the moment when the filigree-worker made his way into the room.

To all his questions the answers of Pierre Morin were clear, definite, and pointed. He never hesitated, or contradicted himself, or varied in the slightest particular from any statement that he made ; and still as he answered, the clerk at the neighbouring table took rapid notes of all his replies. The character of the artisan rose very high in the opinion of the lieutenant-general of police, not so much on account of the moral rectitude he dis-

played — for the officer of police had no objection to a good rogue on an occasion — as on account of his quickness, precision, and presence of mind, which, as is very evident, are high qualities in those who have any thing to do with such subjects as come under the notice of the police.

After having questioned the artisan for more than half an hour, he suddenly asked him if he could write; and receiving an affirmative answer, he made him transcribe two or three sentences, which he looked at with an approving exclamation, and then bade him go into the next room and wait for him there.

Pierre Morin found in the neighbouring chamber several exempts in the dress which was at that time worn by those personages, and two other people in plain clothes, who were, in fact, officers of the police of a superior class, and less ostensible functions. These were the persons who, armed with a *lettre de cachet* and with a sufficient body of inferiors, unseen but within call, would whisper a few words with a soft air to clergyman or nobleman, warrior

or magistrate, in the midst of a gay assembly or a public promenade, and the spectators would see the cheek grow pale, the smile wither away upon the lip, the knees tremble, and the eyes lose their light, as the victim of arbitrary power followed a mandate which could not be resisted.

Pierre Morin looked about for the boy, and not seeing him as he expected, he ventured to ask one of the exempts where he was. The officer looked at him with a smile, somewhat contemptuous, and then replied, "You will soon learn, my friend, that in this room nobody asks any questions or answers any."

"I am sure they ask enough in the other," replied Pierre Morin.

"There is another chamber still," replied the exempt, "where they employ only one, but which you might find somewhat difficult to bear if you were put to it."

This plain allusion to the torture quelled all poor Pierre Morin's gaiety in a moment, and he remained in dead silence till, after some coming and going between the room in which he sat

and that in which he had left the lieutenant of police, he was taken down the stairs by one of the exempts, and put into a *fiacre*, which rolled away towards the Châtelet. At the door of that building stood the carriage of the lieutenant of police, who had preceded the artisan by a few minutes; and on passing through the small wicket into the interior of that gloomy and awful abode of wretchedness and crime, the porter whispered something to the exempt, who paused in his progress, and, seeing that poor Pierre Morin had advanced a step or two before him, he told him to stand back till he was called for. "People get in here fast enough," he said in a sullen tone — "you may find it more difficult to get out again."

The good filigree-worker very easily believed the words of the exempt; and in fact his advance had been rather the effect of agitation at finding himself in such a place, than of alacrity. What he was brought there for he knew not; and although he derived some hope of not being detained there, from the circumstance of the criminal lieutenant having pre-

ceded him, yet many a vague and horrible apprehension was raised in his breast, by the sight of those dark arches and heavy walls, which were but too terribly famed in French history. In this state of uncertainty and fear, the poor artisan would gladly have turned his attention to any thing but his own situation; and an immense large dog, with a leathern collar bristling with iron spikes, which stood beside the gaoler*, was the first object with which he endeavoured to employ himself. On putting out his hand, however, to pat the animal's head, he found that it was inspired by the spirit of the place; first snapping violently at the hand that attempted to caress it, and then — after looking at him fiercely for a moment — flying at his throat with a sharp yell. The turnkey laughed, but made a sign with his finger to the dog, which instantly retreated to his master's side.

* Each of the turnkeys of the Châtelet at this time was followed by one or more of these dogs, who, we have reason to believe, were taught to drive the prisoners hither or thither like flocks of beasts. They were trained, too, we are told, with extraordinary care.

A long silence ensued; but Pierre Morin was neither of an age, nor a nation, nor a character to remain long still and unoccupied; and after fixing his eyes for a minute or two on some object on the other side of the court, he moved a little towards a large heavy wooden case which stood close by the wicket. It bore evident signs of having been constructed many years before; was in shape like a very large coffin; and Pierre Morin would willingly have asked what was its use, had he not received more than one severe rebuke in the course of the morning. The eyes of the gaoler, however, followed him, and then turned towards the exempt with a grim and meaning smile.

“Do you know what that is, my good youth?” the turnkey said, at length. “That is what we call *the crust of the pie*.”

Poor Pierre Morin was as much in the dark as ever; and, not choosing to ask any thing farther, he remained murmuring, “The crust of the pie! The crust of the pie!”

“Ay,” said the turnkey, after having suffered him to puzzle himself with the matter for some

time — “the crust of the pie; that is to say, it is the *cercueil bannal*, the coffin of the quarter. Now you see that when one of our pets dies, which generally happens every other day, we pop him in there at once, and send him to the burying-ground, where he lies quite as comfortably in his shroud as if he had ever so many feet of oak round about him. That is a needless luxury, too, a shroud: I don’t see why we should give them a shroud — they give us nothing but trouble.”

“And do you bury them directly?” said Pierre Morin, in a low voice.

“To be sure,” replied the turnkey: “what should we keep them above ground for? We give half an hour to make sure that it’s all right, and then we cart them off. It sometimes happens, indeed, that one of our *pailleux** dies, while another is sickish, and then we wait till we see if the other won’t go too: you see the crust of the pie is big enough to hold more than one partridge;” and, laughing aloud at his

* A name given to the prisoners, from their lying on straw in their dungeons.

own joke, he gave the public coffin a kick with his foot, and then added, as it returned a dull hollow sound, "It is empty now; but I put three in it yesterday — so that may do for a day or two at least."

It is astonishing how familiarity hardens the heart of man to human suffering, and steels us against all the strange and horrible things of earthly existence; but there are some men who, without any such terrible training, feel a pleasure in the sight of sorrow — derive a sort of agreeable excitement from witnessing the pangs and miseries of life in others. I once met with a man who had been the public executioner in a large city of France during the most sanguinary period of the Revolution. He had become a cripple, in consequence of wounds afterwards received in war, and had known in his own person much of the anguish and sorrow which he had formerly aided to inflict upon others; but yet, when I asked him if he did not look back with horror and regret at those times and deeds, he laughed, and said "Not at all;" that he only wished such days would

come back again, and that he were able to cut off the dogs' heads as before. His eyes, too, sparkled when he spoke on the subject, so as to leave no doubt of his sincerity.

Such a one was the turnkey with whom the good Pierre Morin was now speaking; and although he very well understood that the artisan was not likely to remain under his gentle custody, yet he took a delight in stirring up all sorts of apprehensions in his bosom, and in presenting every painful and disagreeable object to his mind that the place could suggest.

He was not suffered to go on much longer, however; for in a minute or two after the above dialogue had taken place a messenger came to summon Pierre Morin and the exempt to the presence of the lieutenant of police. They found him at one end of a large hall, seated in an arm-chair, with two or three clerks at a table beside him, and at the other end of the room some twenty or thirty prisoners, with a number of gaolers and archers, as they were still called, though it must be understood that the bow and arrow had long disappeared from amongst them.

“Come hither,” said the criminal lieutenant, beckoning to Pierre Morin; and when the artisan had approached his side, he added in a lower voice, “You are to understand by the words ‘number one’ the man who had the knife; by ‘number two,’ the man who held the goldsmith down. Mark all these prisoners as they pass before you; and when you recognise either of the assassins, say ‘number one’ or ‘number two,’ as the case may be.”

He paused for a few moments after he had spoken, and then made a sign to one of the turnkeys, upon which the prisoners, one by one, were ordered to march forward, and, passing before the lieutenant and those who surrounded him, to make their exit by a door on his left hand.

To the eye of a philosopher, it might have been a curious and interesting spectacle to trace, in the aspect of those unhappy men, the effects of imprisonment, under various circumstances, upon their several characters. There was the gay light debauchee, who had found his way into the Châtelet in consequence of some criminal intrigue or idle quarrel, passing on upon

the tips of his toes as lightly and thoughtlessly as if he had never committed evil or endured sorrow. There was the man of deeper feelings, bowed down by the sense of crime or shame, walking forward with the eye bent upon the ground, and the flushed hectic of anxious care upon his cheek. There was the daring and brutal criminal, hardened in offences and impudent in iniquity, staring full in the faces of those before whom he passed, and seeming almost inclined to whistle, as if in defiance of the authority which he believed had done its worst upon him. Then came the dull and heavy man of guilt and of despair, who bore about with him the memories of many years' imprisonment and exclusion from all social intercourse, with the light of hope gone out in his eye and in his heart, and nothing left but tenacity of life and capability of endurance. But who was that who came at length, with a bold and even menacing brow, with a firm step and measured military tread, but withal a restless and anxious eye, and a lip which quivered—it might be with anger, it might be with apprehension?

“ Number two,” said the artisan aloud, as the prisoner passed, without the slightest hesitation, and with a firm, distinct, and even solemn voice, as if his mind were much affected by the importance of the occasion, and the awful duty that fell upon him.

“ Are you quite sure ?” demanded the lieutenant, in a low tone.

“ As I live !” replied Pierre Morin ; and immediately the lieutenant made a sign with his finger to one of the archers, who followed the prisoner out.

Two or three others now passed in succession before the lieutenant and his party, without a word being said by the good artisan. At length, however, there appeared a personage of distinguished mien, who advanced with a graceful and easy step, slow, calm, deliberate, with no sort of expression upon his countenance which could at all indicate the feelings of his heart, unless it were a slight but somewhat supercilious smile, as if contempt for the whole proceeding mastered every other sensation.

“ Number one,” said the artisan firmly ;

and the other, without taking any notice, passed on. Two more prisoners followed without notice; and then the lieutenant of police, rising, gave some directions in a low voice to the officers near him.

“Come hither, my friend,” he said at length, turning to Pierre Morin. “We have seldom such fellows as you to deal with; but get you home, and rest in peace till I send for you again. Never be out of the house, however, for a whole day together, till this business is over; and if you behave as well at the trial as you have done to-day, we will give you something better to do than twisting silver wire into filigree baskets.”

CHAP. VII.

IN all the streets and alleys of the city of Paris, in the squares, and along the quays, there was a continual cry kept up during the whole of the morning of the 30th of April, by a number of men whose stout lungs had acquired redoubled power by the constant practice of shouting forth whatever was calculated to excite the curiosity of the Parisian public.

“*Arrêt de mort ! Arrêt de mort !* Sentence of death ! Sentence of death !” cried the sturdy hawkers, as they ran through the streets with bundles of printed papers in their hands, selling, for a small piece of copper, to the eager multitude the judgment of the law in the trial of the Count de H—— and the Chevalier de M——, for the cold-blooded and deliberate murder of the old goldsmith, Gaultier Fiteau.

The people read the sentence with surprise

and terror — for the names of both the condemned announced noble blood and high station; and the punishment, the horrid punishment of the wheel, was one which, in the memory of man, had never been inflicted on any but one of lowly race. Almost daily, indeed, the people saw one of their own class undergo the same terrible fate without wonder or horror; and many, who witnessed with their own eyes the bloodshed and the agony, prepared, the very next day, by some similar crime to that of the wretch who had just expired, to take their place on the same scaffold where he had suffered. But now — oh strange human nature! — the very same persons, who beheld the punishment almost with indifference in men of a lower rank, attached feelings of awe and horror to it which they had never felt before, now that it was to be inflicted upon the nobles of the land. They, in fact, transferred, by a strange process of the human mind, the abhorrence which they should have felt for the additional guilt implied by the circumstance of education, to the punishment about to be in-

flicted, and viewed the wheel with sensations with which they had never regarded it before.

Such was the popular feeling upon the occasion of this condemnation; but amongst the nobles themselves, still more agitation and horror existed. Pride came into play in their case, — the pride of blood, and of that rank which had long given them a certain degree of immunity in the commission of evil. The privileges of their station, they fancied, extended to all and every thing. They were indignant at the very sentence pronounced by the court; that two noblemen should be broken on the wheel like common felons; and they doubted not — they would not doubt, that the sentence would be commuted, even if the criminals were not pardoned. At first they had the daring to ask for absolute pardon; but the stern countenance with which they were received, soon taught them that they must be more moderate, and a commutation was all that was required.

The answer was, “It is impossible;” and now every argument and entreaty was made use of to obtain some mitigation: thousands of

the nobility flocked to the palace; conferences were held amongst themselves; and it was represented to the prince who then governed France, that the criminals were connected with all the first families in the land. They urged the horror, the shame, and the disgrace it would be to many a high and noble person, if the degrading sentence, usually pronounced upon a conviction of common felons, should be carried into effect against two men of so high a rank. The prince was immovable, however; and to every entreaty urged upon these grounds he replied, "It is the crime that makes the disgrace, and not the punishment."

The fatal day arrived; and, though till the last moment efforts were still made, still, at the appointed hour, the dark procession began to move from the Châtelet to the Place de Grève, and the awful scene of public execution was enacted without one particular of the sentence being omitted in the punishment of the murderers of Gaultier Fiteau. Limb by limb, and bone by bone, they were broken on the wheel by the iron bar of the executioner; and the

cries of even the firmest of the two made the air around ring, till they had no longer strength to utter more than a mere entreaty for water to quench their burning thirst, and for the blow of death to terminate their agony.

While this awful scene was enacting in the Place de Grève, and while it was producing its effect, not only upon the minds of those who witnessed the punishment, but upon the higher as well as the lower orders of France, our good friend Pierre Morin remained closeted with the lieutenant-general of police, talking over many matters of no slight interest to the good artisan. At length the conference closed, and the filigree-worker issued forth into the streets, and took his way towards a part of the town which went by the name of the Temple.

Not only those who had only seen him, as we have described him in the first chapter of this work, clothed in his labouring jacket and leathern apron, but those also who had beheld him in his holyday suit, ready to join the dance at the *guingette*, would have been equally puzzled to recognise our old friend Pierre Morin, as he

now appeared in the streets of Paris. He was dressed in a handsome suit of black, with his hair nicely combed and cut into the fashionable shape; his hands, which were somewhat too brown, at that time, for the rest of his appearance, were covered with fine gloves; he had a small sword by his side in a black sheath, and a new hat upon his head, in shape somewhat between that of the court beau and the young lawyer. Thus adorned was the outward man of good Pierre Morin; nor did he himself at all disgrace his habiliments. His good countenance naturally appeared to better advantage in a more becoming dress, and his powerful and fine person was equally benefited by the change of his garments. He seemed perfectly at ease in them also, and walked as if his leg had never known any thing but a silk stocking, and his foot had been pressed by nothing coarser than cordovan. As he passed through the lieutenant's antechamber, some of the exempts looked at him with a grin, but their faces became composed into decent gravity the moment that he turned towards them. On his way

along the street, if any persons remarked him particularly, they might place him in their own minds amongst some of those not over rich, but rising classes, which were the general wearers of black coats at that time in Paris; the successful literary men, the poorer members of the academy, the promising artist, the celebrated musician. But the dress of Pierre Morin was well chosen, for it was of all others that which was best calculated to pass without attracting any attention whatsoever.

Thus, as he walked on towards the Temple, he brushed against more than one distant acquaintance without receiving any thing but a casual look, and not the slightest sign or token of recognition. Pierre Morin took no notice of them either; but it must not be inferred from that fact that the good artisan was one to suffer fortune to change favour. It was not in the slightest degree that he forgot or despised his former acquaintances; his heart was as warm and as kindly, as honest and as true, as ever. But Pierre Morin had other objects in view — a new course of life was open

before him"—and he hoped, even in doing his duty therein, to be enabled to serve and assist some, in whose welfare he took a high and unselfish interest.

One of those whom he thus passed as he went on slowly towards the Temple was no other than our friend the Abbé de Castelneau, who was walking heavily forward, with his eyes bent upon the ground, his countenance paler than usual, and his lips shut tight together, as if some bitter and anxious thoughts were labouring in his bosom. Though Pierre Morin had sought for him anxiously, as the reader already knows, and had been much disquieted by not finding him, he would not be tempted by any consideration to stop him and speak with him now. The abbé, on his part, lifted his eyes for a moment to the artisan's face as he passed, but did not appear to recognise him in the slightest degree; and their clothes brushed against each other, without the wearers' speaking. It must be recollected, indeed, that the difference, in those days, between the dress of an artisan and that of a gentleman was very,

very much greater than it is at present; so that it was not at all astonishing the abbé, who had seen Pierre Morin only twice, should not at all recollect him in his present garb. After proceeding upon the errand which took him to the Temple, a place which was then invested with the privileges of sanctuary, so far, at least, as the protection of debtors from their creditors went — for the right of shielding criminals from the arm of the law had long been done away with altogether, — Pierre Morin returned to his home, where he found his good wife, Margiette, almost as gay a bird, in point of plumage, as himself. Leaving them, however, to enjoy the comforts of their new situation, we may as well speak a word or two more of the Abbé de Castelneau, having already mentioned his name in this chapter.

After proceeding some way along the streets, which were now nearly vacant, he was met by one of the hawkers crying an account of the execution of that morning, before the unhappy criminals were cold upon the wheel. Numbers of people coming away from the bloody scene

then presented themselves ; and the abbé — who was, in fact, at this period one of the inhabitants of the Temple, on account of a small debt which he could not pay — turned his steps home, for fear he should be discovered by some officer beyond the limits of his temporary asylum. On entering the dingy chamber which he there inhabited, the woman who took care of those apartments, as well as several others, placed a small paper packet in his hand, at the address of which the abbé looked gravely, while she retired to her usual avocations.

He then turned the packet, in order to open it and see the contents. But the moment his eye rested on the seal, his cheek turned as pale as death, his lips lost their colour, and the packet fell from his trembling hands. He gazed at it for a moment or two as it lay upon the ground, as if it presented some horrible sight to his eyes. But then, with a sudden effort, he stooped down, took it up, tore open the seal, and, to his surprise, beheld two or three of those “ *actions de banque* ” which were at that period in common circulation through

the French metropolis as the chief paper money of the land. The sum thus placed before him was considerable; but, on the top of the notes, was a very small piece of paper, folded into the shape of a billet, and sealed with the same seal the sight of which seemed so much to surprise him. Within the note was written, “Abbé de Castelneau, quit Paris, and never return to it.”

There was no signature, and the handwriting was unknown to him; but the words had a great effect upon his mind, if we may judge by the facts, that his debt was immediately paid, and that before sunset on that day he was once more out of Paris, and on his way into the south of France.

CHAP. VIII.

“ I WILL tell you,” says Rosalind, “ who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.” But the truth is, however, that Time gallops with us all. In the impatience of our boyhood he may seem to go too slow, and in the feebleness of our age he may seem to go too fast ; but, alas ! his pace is very equable, as we all find at last ; and skilful must be that rider whom he does not in the end leave in the mire.

It is an excellent observation of a great poet, that, let a man live as long as he will, the first thirty years of his life will always seem the longest ; and the daily routine of our after years passes like the round of a clock, while the hands on the outside and the movements within mark the passing of time to others, without a con-

sciousness thereof in itself, till the weight has run down, and the pendulum stands still.

The place, however, in which time may be made to run the fastest, is in a book, where the author, so long as he is writing it at least, by the magic wand called his pen, reigns supreme with undisputed sway over every thing that is brought within his own particular circle. Even Time himself, the hoary-headed sage whose resistless power neither towers nor temples, thrones nor dynasties, have been able to withstand, is obliged to obey when brought under that rod, and to hurry or slacken his pace according to the writer's will. He may, perhaps, revenge himself upon the readers afterwards ; but here he is under our dominion ; and accordingly, I command that eighteen years should pass, as if it were but a dream, between the conclusion of the last chapter and the events which I am now about to record. Suppose yourself, gentle reader, to be one of the seven sleepers, and the interval that I now propose to you will seem but as a short nap.

Space, too, I must control as well as time,

and lead the mind away from the busy metropolis of France into a distant province, conveying myself and others into the midst of scenes far more congenial to all our feelings than the dull and dusty capital, with its vicious crowds and idle gaieties, where pleasure supplies the place of happiness, and luxury tries to pass itself for contentment.

Eighteen years had elapsed, then, since the execution of the murderers of Gaultier Fiteau. Eighteen years had elapsed since the talent and decision which Pierre Morin had displayed on that occasion had attracted the notice of one who was willing and able to raise him above the station in which we have first depicted him. Eighteen years had passed since the Abbé de Castelneau had adopted, if we may so call it, the child Annette, and had quitted Paris for the second time since he first appeared before the reader.

What were the changes those eighteen years had produced? In the states and empires of Europe, changes immense and extraordinary! The same king, indeed, still sat upon the throne

of France, but society itself had undergone a vast alteration, and all the relations of the kingdom with foreign states were different. Enemies had become friends, and friends enemies, and the nearest of the monarch's kindred were hostilely opposed to his views.

To a narrower circle, however, we must bound our own inquiries. What were the changes those eighteen years had produced in the Abbé de Castelneau, and the child he had so strangely adopted at a moment when, as we have shown, he had but little wealth of any kind even to support himself? In person he remained very much the same as we have already described him. His hair might be somewhat more grey; and certain indescribable appearances might indicate to an attentive eye, that Time's wing had flapped more than once over his head since we first presented him to the eye of the reader. He was older in appearance, but yet not much; for at the former period he had looked older than he really was, and at the latter he looked younger.

In his mind there had taken place various

changes: and although I do not intend to enter into any minute account of his character, but rather to let it develop itself, yet it may be as well to keep in mind that this is no creation of the fancy, but a living creature of flesh and blood; a being mingled of good and evil which then existed, and which has had many a successor since. It is well to remember also that he was a man of strong passions and feelings, both vicious and virtuous; and that the thing then called philosophy had taken away from him those principles upon which his good feelings might have rested secure, and had only served to teach him to conceal his sensations from others, and very often from himself.

Since he had quitted Paris, however, the better feelings had obtained wider sway: there was not, in short, so much temptation to evil; there were many opportunities of good. He learnt to abhor, in new employments and occupations, amusements which he had formerly sought for the exercise of a keen and active mind, and the gratification of an eager and excitable disposition. The gaming-table had been one of

his greatest resources, and he had always sought those games in which chance and skill had an equal share, in order that he might stimulate his heart by expectation and anxiety, and exercise his mind by calculation at the same time. There was also a sort of pride and pleasure to him in displaying a certain stoical apathy, which he did not really feel, in regard to the risks and the event of the game. Since he had quitted Paris, however, he had never touched, or even seen, a card. He had found for himself occupation in the neighbourhood of the small house, not far from the town of Agen, in which he dwelt for ten years; and out of the very limited income that remained to him he had contrived to do great good amongst the peasantry around. He had quieted dissensions, assisted the poor, had given education to the young, and advice to the old; and, living very frugally himself, he never felt the pressure of need, nor regret at the loss of luxury.

In his own home, however, still remained the sweet child whom he had adopted; and that very fact might be perhaps the great cause—though,

beyond doubt, there were many others co-operating—which produced such a change in the habits, if not in the character, of the Abbé de Castelnau. It was not only that she offered sufficient occupation for every spare moment; it was not only that she afforded sufficient excitement, and supplied a matter of continual speculation to his philosophy, but it was likewise—at least I believe so—that there is something in the pure and simple innocence of infancy, a fragrance, as it were, fresh from the hand of the great Creator of all spirits, which naturally communicates itself to those who are brought near it; purifying, sanctifying, and blessing, by the sight of that guilelessness which they must love, and the loss of which in their own case they must regret.

This very fact was a matter of speculation to the Abbé de Castelnau himself; and often, when he quitted her, after having amused himself for many an hour with her infant sports and gambols, he would walk forth up the side of the hill with his eyes bent down upon the ground, looking thoughtful, and, as

the peasantry used to fancy, gloomy, but with a chastened joy in his heart which he had never known in scenes of revelry, and pleasure, and indulgence.

“It is strange!” he would murmur to himself—“it is very strange! I feel better, and wiser, and happier; and all from communion with a child!”

Thus passed by the days, to him seeming almost as brief as the sentences in which we have recorded the lapse of those eighteen years. But before much more than one half of those eighteen years had flown, a great change took place in the fortunes of the Abbé de Castelneau; and he was suddenly not only restored to as much affluence as he had ever known, but to much greater wealth than he had ever any right to expect. It was not that any of the different benefices which he held, having satisfied the claims of his creditors, were turned to his own use, for it required a longer time than that to pay all the debts that he had contracted; but, at the end of the ninth year, a report reached him that the son of his

uncle, the Count de Castelneau, — the only surviving son — for it may be recollected that the elder son had been killed in battle about the period at which this history commences, — was dangerously ill.

The tidings seemed to affect him but little, for this young man had been but a mere boy when the last abbé had been admitted within the walls of the château of Castelneau. He had loved his elder cousin most sincerely, and had lamented him truly and deeply when he fell by the banks of the Rhine ; but his own conduct had excluded him for many years from the dwelling of his noble relation, and he took no thought or interest in the young heir of that high house.

Soon after, news again reached him that the youth was dead : all he said in the way of mourning was, “ Poor boy ! ” But he added, “ Now, were I avaricious, I would go and throw myself at the feet of this old man, profess repentance for all my past errors, and induce him to leave me his rich estates, as well as the old château which must be mine —

unless, indeed, he marry again, and have another heir. But I will do none of these things: he was cruel to his eldest son, harsh to his own unhappy wife, stern and unjust to me, and I will not bend to him. Let him leave his wealth to whom he will, I shall have enough to give a dower to my sweet little Annette, and that will close the account well."

He went not to see his uncle, nor held any communication with him; and it may be easily supposed that his uncle took no notice of him. Not long after, however, the Bishop of Toulouse, in passing through that part of the country, took up his abode at the abbé's house for a day or two, inquiring into various facts concerning the neighbouring districts, in regard to which none could give him such good information as his host. The abbé entertained him with a degree of studied plainness that amused the good prelate, but put him at his ease. There was certainly a slight addition made to the breakfast, dinner, and supper of the Abbé de Castelneau, but it was in quantity, not in quality, that any change appeared. The bishop was

struck, pleased, and amused, too, with the young Annette, and asked her name one day after she had just quitted the room.

“Annette de St. Morin,” replied the abbé, briefly.

The bishop smiled. “Not your child, I hope, monsieur l’abbé?” said the bishop.

“Yes, my lord!” replied the abbé; but the moment after he added, with a low bow and a cynical look, “my child by adoption and affection, but nothing more.”

The bishop made no reply, but took his leave of the abbé on the following day; and some months passed in the usual course, without any event of importance sufficient to require notice here. At length, however, a courier with a foaming horse stopped at the dwelling of the Abbé de Castelnau, who was at that moment walking down the steps of his house into the little garden that surrounded it. The courier bowed low and presented to him a letter, which the abbé took, and turned to the address with the same calm and unmoved countenance which he now habitually maintained.

On the back of the epistle he read, "To the Abbé, Count of Castelneau, Castres, near Agen." The seal was black; and on opening it he proceeded to read a letter from the curate of the parish in which the château of Castelneau was situated, informing him of the death of his relation, and telling him that the late count had left no will, having destroyed, the very day before he died, a will which he had made some time previous.

The abbé thus found himself at once in possession of rank and great wealth; but still he received such intelligence without a change of expression, and merely ordered his simple antiquated chaise — which seemed to have appropriated to itself all the dust that had been raised upon the roads in the vicinity for more than a century — to be brought round with the two long-tailed mules which had drawn him and his little charge about the neighbourhood of Agen ever since he had quitted Paris.

Every thing was made ready in the space of two hours. The abbé got in first, the little

girl and Donnine followed, the old man-servant in the grey livery took his place on the outside, and, having hitherto acted the part of gardener as well as lackey, now performed the office of coachman. The journey occupied more than one day, as any person acquainted with the country may understand, although it must be remembered, that the Castelneau of which we speak is not that in the Herault, but rather that at the distance of some four or five leagues from Cahors, in one of the most picturesque and extraordinary parts of France. There are two or three other places of the same name. Another belonging to the same family was to be found near Auch; but it will be remarked, that wherever the name of Castelneau is met with there will be likewise found a combination of wood, water, and rocky scenery, affording much picturesque beauty, and presenting many a spot where the poet and the painter may rest and dream. The Castelneau, however, near Auch, though it possessed at that time, and perhaps does still, an old castle, was not inhabited by the counts of Castelneau; and the

place towards which the abbé bent his steps was that in Querci, not far from Figeac.

Every thing was new and delightful to Annette de St. Morin, as the little girl was now called, so that to her at least the journey did not seem a long one. The abbé showed no impatience on his own part; but still he pressed the mules upon their work, as the funeral of the late count was to be delayed till his arrival.

At length he reached the castle of his ancestors — a castle, probably the oldest of the kind in France, of which many parts still stand, as they were raised from the ground, in the dark ages under the Merovingian kings of France. The servants, drawn up in mourning, waited him in the great hall, with somewhat of feudal pomp and parade; and, passing through the double line, the abbé went on without taking notice of any one, till he reached the chamber which had been prepared for him, and in which the curé of the village, and the principal notary of Figeac, had remained till his arrival.

The funeral was performed with great pomp. The abbé took undisputed possession of the

property ; and, accompanied by the notary, broke the seals which had been placed upon the various cabinets, and went through the examination of innumerable papers which had belonged to the dead man.

It is always a sad and terrible task — where there is any human feeling left in the heart — that of examining the papers and letters of those who are gone. The records of fruitless affections, of disappointed hopes, of tenderness perhaps misplaced, perhaps turned by the will of fate to scourge the heart that felt it, are there all before our eyes. Side by side, at one view, and in one instant, we have before us the history of a human life, and its sad and awful moral — we have there the picture of every bright enjoyment, of every warm domestic blessing ; while, written by the hand of death beneath them, is the terrible truth, “ These are all past away for ever, and so will it soon be with thee likewise ! ”

Whether he felt these things or not, nobody could tell from the countenance of the Abbé, Count de Castelneau. He appeared neither more

nor less sad after the examination than before. One thing, however, he did find, amongst the papers of his deceased relation, which called up to his lip that faint and doubtful smile of which we have before had occasion to speak. This was a letter from the Bishop of Toulouse to the late Count de Castelneau, and dated some few months before the death of the latter. It gave an account of the abbé's own state and character at the time, and represented him as entirely changed and reclaimed from all the vices which at one time had degraded him, living an honourable and useful life, and conferring many benefits on those who surrounded him.

The Abbé de Castelneau sealed the letter up, and labelled it with the words, "My character from my last place;" but he did not doubt, any more than the reader does, that this very character, given to him by the Bishop of Toulouse, had put him in possession of the wealth and estates which were now his. It may be asked, If that wealth brought happiness with it? the answer must be, It would appear not. The abbé was

not more cheerful, less so even : his gravity sunk into gloom : there was a sadness about him which not even the presence of the being he loved best on earth, his own little Annette as he used to call her, could altogether dissipate.

His personal habits in the meantime remained almost unchanged, though he took the necessary measures to free himself from his obligations to the church. The whole neighbourhood said, when they heard of this, that the Count de Castelneau would marry for the sake of an heir ; that he was a young man, and a handsome man, and one that had loved, but too much, the society of women. It was not likely, therefore, that he would remain single : and every body anticipated that Annette de St. Morin would soon feel a great difference in the conduct of her father by adoption ; for that a new mistress would be speedily given to that household of which she had been hitherto the pride and delight.

The count, however, did not justify these prognostications. Though he had abandoned the church, he still retained, in all his garments,

the grave hue of its habiliments; lived with infinite frugality and moderation, and showed a great distaste to that which is commonly called society. The Count de Castelneau might still have retained possession of some of the rents and revenues which he had derived from the church, although he had freed himself from his vows in all due form, as was but too frequently the case in France at that time. He did not think fit so to do, however, but paid all his debts, and resigned every benefice, abbey, and impropriation which had formed the great bulk of his income before the death of his uncle. In the management of his own property he was liberal and charitable to others, though sparing to himself; and, had he sought for such honours, might have gained the character of a saint. But of such a distinction he was in no degree ambitious.

CHAP. IX.

HAVING traced the passing of the eighteen years which we have mentioned, as far as in their flight they influenced the situation of the Abbé de Castelneau, we must now pause for a short time to inquire into their effect upon another of our characters; though here the subject is infinitely more delicate, and the investigation more obscure.

To examine into the tortuous ways of the human heart—a labyrinth where darkness is added to intricacy—is at the best a most difficult task; for where shall we find a clue, where a light to guide us, where a voice to tell us at each step whether we are right or wrong? But to examine into the heart of a woman is a more difficult undertaking still; for the paths are finer and less distinctly traced, and very, very often even the owner of the place remains wilfully

ignorant of all the many turnings and windings of the way. Coarse hands can separate the bundles of coarse twine; but it needs a fine touch to divide the film of the silkworm, or to discover the flaws of the diamond. Nevertheless it is a part of my appointed task to examine the progress, and inquire into the character and feelings, of her whom we must now call, as her father by adoption had called her, Annette de St. Morin.

We left her an infant; a very beautiful infant truly; full of engaging graces and sweet smiles, overflowing with health and good temper. Tears were great strangers in her eyes, even as a child; and, whatever she might carry out of the world, or go through therein, she certainly brought into it as great a fund of happy sensations as ever infant was yet endowed with. Human nature is so fond of happiness, that it is scarcely possible to help loving any being we see innocently happy. The reverse, indeed, does not hold good, for the deepest and the tenderest interest can be excited by the sight of virtuous grief; but still there is something so

engaging in happiness, that few hearts can witness it without being attracted towards those who possess it. Certain it is — whether by the possession of this attractive power, or what other quality, I know not — certain it is that Annette de St. Morin, as an infant, engaged the hearts of all those who surrounded her. We have already mentioned the love which she excited in the Abbé de Castelneau : — it was the same with the good Donnine, it was the same with the old lackey, and with every other person that approached her. This was the case in infancy; and as time daily more and more developed her graces, and opened new channels for her sunshiny cheerfulness to display itself, — as she learned to clap her little hands with joy when any thing pleased her, to run from one fond friend to another, and to speak broken words with the sweet tongue of youth, — there came melting sensations over hearts that had never melted before, and feelings of tenderness that set all cold philosophy at defiance.

She preserved all the beauties and the graces with which she set out in life till she was about

seven years old ; and, during that period, she went through all the ordinary diseases of childhood, showing in moments of suffering and sickness the same imperturbable and happy calm which we have before mentioned. She might be languid with fever, but she was never querulous or irritable : the lip might be parched and the eye dull ; but there was always a smile came up upon the face when her ear caught the sounds of the voices that she loved.

When she was about seven years of age, she began to lose the beauty which had distinguished her ; her features grew ill proportioned, her face thin, her form lost the roundness of childhood ; and though her eyes were still fine and her hair beautiful, yet no one who did not examine very closely perceived any promise of after-loveliness. This state of transition continued for several years ; and at the time when she arrived at the château of Castelneau many of the ladies in the vicinity pronounced her an ugly little girl, and, though they looked in vain for any likeness between her and her adopted father, yet argued strongly that she must be

his own child, because otherwise he could take no interest in one so devoid of beauty.

There was a change coming, however. Some two years after, the complexion of Annette de St. Morin began to resume the clear rosy brightness which it had in her infancy. Her form grew, not only tall and graceful, but rounded in the most exquisite contour; gradually, year after year, her features became finer, the whole arrangements of her countenance more harmonious, her eyes retained their brightness and their lustre, the lashes that overshadowed them appeared longer and darker and softer every day; and the lips, which had always smiled sweetly, now became full and rosy, with that exquisite bend which is so rarely seen, except on the cold pale face of the Grecian statue. The hand and the foot remained small and symmetrical; and it was remarked, that, in whatever way they fell, the lines they formed were all full of grace. Even her hair, which was very luxuriant, though it did not absolutely curl in large masses, except when very long, yet had an irrepressible wave

which pervaded the whole, and caught the light in glossy gleams wherever the sun fell upon it. In short, she thus changed twice in those eighteen years, from a lovely infant to a plain child, and from a plain child to a most beautiful woman.

Such had been the alterations of her person during the period I have mentioned; and I have spoken of them first, as less difficult to deal with than her mind. But that mind went on step by step, developing all its powers under careful nurture. The course of education to which the abbé subjected her was very strange, when his circumstances and situation are considered. It was not the education which one would have expected from a man, a dissipated man, a Frenchman, or a Roman Catholic. In the first place, it was perfectly feminine: there were none of those harsh studies in it with which men, when intrusted with the education of women, so often unsex them. From the earliest age, he taught her the love of truth and sincerity; he implanted in her mind that every thing was to be sacrificed to that; he made it, in short, the first principle of her

education. But he taught her, too, to be gentle, and docile, and thoughtful for others. He taught her to avoid all that might give pain ; but what may seem stranger than all, is, that he taught her these things all from one source — The Book of our salvation.

In the course of so teaching her, he suffered the cause of his anxiety to fill her mind with the words of that book to appear on one or two occasions. The first time that he did so was when she was about ten years old, and he found that something which she met with in the history of the Saviour was too difficult for her to comprehend.

“ My dear child,” said the abbé, “ you cannot understand it, and I do not expect you to do so ; but I am giving these treasures to your heart, and not to your mind : your mind will share in them hereafter. I wish them to be part of your feelings, part of your existence, the dowry of your spirit. I tell you, Annette, that I would give willingly this right hand to have received these words in youth through the heart, rather than in manhood through the understanding. For oh ! my sweet girl, after

that heart has been hardened by the fierce fire of the world, *we may be convinced without faith, and believe without feeling.*"

Upon this principle it was evident that he acted; but there was nothing in the least ascetic in his teaching, for it was all redolent of that joy and cheerfulness which breathes from the Volume that he opened to her. In short, he told her to be happy, and he taught her how.

He added, moreover, every thing that could give her the graces of society, and the highest accomplishments that could be obtained. He thought none of these things frivolous and light when they did not interfere with higher things; and he believed, nay, he knew, that they might go hand in hand with the holiest thoughts. He showed her, that every talent and endowment possessed by man, whether corporeal or mental, is the gift of God, and that it is one part of the worship of God to cultivate and employ those talents by every means that he has placed within our power. "God has forbidden excess," he said, "in any thing ;

and he himself has told us those things which in themselves are evil. Thus it would be an impious arraignment of his providence to say, that any of those things which he has given, and not forbidden, may not be used in moderation. 'The lark,' he said, "my child, sings at the gate of heaven. Sing you also in the happiness of your heart; and in so singing, remember the God who made sweet sounds, and who taught man to harmonise them, and to give a finer voice to all the emotions of his mind. The finger of God, too," he said, "is in all the beautiful things of the world; and when, with the pencil, your hand traces them, my Annette, you will not forget the hand that formed them. Every enjoyment that is innocent and moderate we may believe was given us expressly from above; and the test by which you should try your enjoyments is by the prayer that you can repeat after them. If, after any pleasure, you can raise your voice to the Almighty with an attentive and unwavering mind, you may feel sure that your enjoyment has been moderate. If, with a knowledge of his word, you can ask

him to bless you in such things, you may be sure that your enjoyment has been good."

Such were the doctrines that he taught, and such were the principles upon which he acted towards his adopted child. It may be said, this was a much better and more amiable man than he has been represented in the beginning; but such is not the case. I have said that his character was mingled of good and evil; but his love for that child separated the good from the evil, and he gave all the better part to her.

Every advantage that any of the neighbouring towns could afford was procured for Annette with the most boundless generosity by the abbé, after he became Count de Castelleau. Every skilful master that could be heard of was called to the château to give her instruction in turn; and in the hours which were devoted to reading, the abbé, who was a man of refined taste, made her acquainted with all that was beautiful in the first writers in his own and other countries. One thing, however, he excluded entirely, which was that class of composition which was then generally called philoso-

phy. He said, that a man who had once drunk of a cup of poison, and had suffered from the consequences all his life, would never hold the same to the lips of one he loved.

Conducted in this manner, we may easily conceive what was the effect of education upon a mind naturally full of high qualities, and endowed with very great abilities of all kinds. But there was one particular circumstance which affected, in a marked and peculiar manner, the character of Annette de St. Morin. This was the state of comparative seclusion in which she lived. The Count de Castelneau courted not society; and, indeed, during a great part of the year there was but little to be found in the neighbourhood of the château. The metropolis, so to speak, had swallowed up, like a great gulf, the nobility of France; and few, if any of the members of that body, spent more than a month or two on their own estates. When they did appear in the country, they came with all the vices of a great city hot and flagrant about them, and, consequently, they were not very desirable companions either for

the count or his young charge. He took care, however, that the tone of her manners should be high and refined. She had the politeness of nature from gentleness of thought, and all those graces of demeanour which cultivation and refinement of mind can alone afford. But still there was a difference between herself and the general world of Paris. It was difficult to discern in what that difference lay, and yet it was very striking. It was, in truth, that she thought for herself, and did not think only as others thought. Of course, in very many respects, her thoughts were, in substance, the same as other people's; but they suggested themselves in different forms from those of other people, and they continually presented modes and expressions different from those which other persons would have used.

The society which she did mingle with in the neighbourhood, consisted of a few of the old and respectable families of the province, in some of whom poverty, and in some of whom pride counteracted the attractions of the capital and retained them in the country, where small

means afforded all that was necessary, and where old blood and renowned ancestry were sufficient to insure distinction. In Paris such was not the case ; there, even great wealth sunk down to competence ; and old family and great renown were only regarded as small adjuncts to other more attractive qualities, and as nothing without them.

From time to time, too, the count visited the town of Cahors, and took Annette de St. Morin with him ; and on those occasions — generally some public event — the royal officers of the province, and most of the other nobles, even from considerable distances, visited the town, and brought their families to grace the meeting.

Thus Annette de St. Morin was not without a thorough knowledge of all the forms and manners of the world, and was fitted, in every respect, to mingle gracefully with it, and to play her part even with distinction. Still, however, the greater part of her time was passed nearly in solitude ; for at the château of Castelneau a visit was a rare occurrence, and to dine

or sup out in the neighbourhood was an event to be recorded in the history of the year. The count, it is true, during the early part of her life, devoted all the morning to teach and educate her; but after the hour of noon he spent a considerable portion of the day alone, and Annette was left to wander through the neighbouring country and about the grounds of the château as she thought fit.

Every one who has visited that part of France must know that the vicinity of Castelleau is very beautiful, and the very fact of its loveliness had a considerable effect upon her mind. There can be no doubt, that upon the impressions which we receive in youth, through any of the senses, depend, in a great degree, the tastes, if not the feelings, which form our happiness or unhappiness in after years. Those impressions sink more deeply into our hearts than any others we ever receive. They are, as it were, the mould from which the clay takes its form while it is yet soft and unhardened by the fire of the world; and thus it was that Annette de St. Morin derived from the scenes

in which she was accustomed to move peculiar habits of feeling which affected the whole course of her thoughts. Those thoughts were, if one may so term it, picturesque. She loved all that was beautiful, and great, and good; but there was a kind of enthusiastic eagerness in all she did, which was certainly derived from the grandeur and wildness of the scenery which surrounded her in her early years.

Annette's mind was not one that dwelt much upon herself. She knew that she was beautiful; for it is scarcely possible to conceive a situation in which that knowledge can be excluded from a woman's heart, without gross and shameful falsehood on the part of those who surround her — but she knew not how beautiful, nor was she vain of a quality which she estimated at its due value and no more. She thought little of it, in short; and her mind scarcely rested for a moment at a time upon a gift which she felt was shared by every flower and every bird. It was natural that — not living amongst people with whom such things were of much consequence, whom beauty did not attract, and whom

plainness would not have repelled — it was natural that she should not attach to personal advantages that unreal worth which a vain world in general accords to it. She knew not that vice and folly would often be sought and followed for the sake of beauty, where virtue and wisdom would attract no attention or respect. I have said she knew not, but I should have said, she comprehended not ; for she had read and heard that it was so, and, perhaps, gave mere assent to the tale without bringing the thing home to her own heart, for there is a great difference between those three acts, knowing, and comprehending, and feeling. Of course, though she might have knowledge, she had no experience ; and though she had principles to guide her own conduct, she had no data to judge of that of others. Her father, by adoption, had indeed taken pains to give her some insight into the world's ways, yet she had learnt the facts but as a lesson, without any practical application thereof. She often, indeed, was tempted into wild and vague speculations as to what that great world really

was which she heard so frequently talked of; and as she walked by the banks of any of the manifold rivers of that land of streams and fountains, she would gaze thoughtfully upon the waters, wishing that, like them, her mind might flow on through all the thousand scenes of bright nature and glad human life which decorated their banks, and see that busy world of action and endeavour which each town along their course was certain to display. She would picture to herself all that might then meet her eye, and the many matters of deep interest and curiosity which might be opened to her sight. But then, again, a voice seemed to whisper from within, that those waters could not pass amidst the scenes of man's existence without their brightness being troubled by impurity, till at length they would reach their conclusion in a turbid and a darksome stream — that never could they turn back upon their course, but must go onward for ever, bearing with them every burden that was cast upon them, and every fouler stream that was poured in upon their once pure bosom. She shud-

dered as she thus thought, and the brief curiosity in which she had indulged passed away like a dream.

This was not the only speculation, however, with which she amused herself; for knowledge without experience is ever visionary: but as she walked in solitude through the woods and upon the hills in the neighbourhood of Castelneau during those hours which the count spent alone in the château, thousands of bright fancies would rise before her eyes, imaginations that would have become hopes if they had had any tangible object to fix upon. She would ask herself the meaning of the gay lark's song; she would give a voice to the whispering of the wind; the flowers would wake into life under her eyes, and act their parts in dramas of her own creation. These things grew upon her in her sixteenth, seventeenth, and her eighteenth year; but a time was rapidly coming when visions were to give place to realities, and her heart was taught to speak instead of her imagination.

CHAP. X.

THE château of Castelneau still presents towers, and ramparts, and bastions of great antiquity, or at least it did so twenty years ago; but at the more remote period of which I speak, the building was in full preservation, and in external form retained all the peculiarities of the age in which it was built, though the interior had been modernised and fitted up with the luxurious extravagance of the reign of Louis XV. Within the walls of the château were no less than three large courts, separated from each other by massy piles of building, containing long and rambling corridors and extensive halls, with innumerable smaller chambers scattered here and there, with much space wasted, but with no small economy of light. Besides these masses of building, and the vast circuit of walls and towers that surrounded

them and united them together, were several large square edifices detached from the rest of the castle, or only united to it, either by a sort of covered bridge high up in the air, or a passage cut through the rock beneath, and issuing forth from those apartments, which, in the modern arrangements that had been made in the castle were appropriated to butlers, cooks, and serving men. Though the mole-like process of proceeding under the earth gives an idea of mystery and darkness to our minds in the present day, when we are all together what may be called an upstairs world, yet to the servants of the château of Castelneau the matter had become so familiar, that they passed through a subterranean passage, which would have furnished the highest enjoyment to one of the votaries of Udolpho, as calmly and coolly as we go from one ordinary room to another. Notwithstanding the antiquity of the château itself, by some extraordinary forgetfulness on the part of its inhabitants, it was unprovided even with a ghost. The eastern tower itself possessed some of the most cheerful apartments in the

whole building; and that face of the château which looked towards the south contained several of the most gay and smiling halls that the arts of any period could have devised, with deep oriel windows, in the recesses of which the sunshine loved to linger and draw patterns on the oaken floor. In short, many parts of the castle afforded as bright and pleasant a habitation as it was possible for man to desire; and the number of servants and retainers usually kept up therein filled it so full of human life, that every thing like the appearance of solitude was banished from its precincts.

The neighbourhood, indeed, though the land is most warm and sunny, had somewhat of the wild and the sublime in its general aspect. It retains more than any other part of France that I have visited that feudal colouring, if I may so term it, which leads the mind back at once to early and more simple times. There are manifold woods and streams, wide forests, deep vallies, fountains innumerable. Nor are these last alone the sources of small rills, that spring in a jet of silver from the bank, and

flow on, soon losing themselves in some greater body of water ; but in some parts of that district, rivers burst at once from the green turf in the midst of the forest, issuing from a depth that no one as yet has been able to fathom. The houses of the peasantry, however lowly, have a neatness about them which speaks of natural taste : there is a love of flowers, and a fondness for bright, but harmonious, colours, which smacks of a peculiar sort of poetry of the mind ; and the very jargon of the peasantry is sweet and softened, however incorrect, giving proof of an ear highly sensible to musical sounds. Here, indeed, was spoken in former times, in great purity, the soft *Langue d'Oc*, undoubtedly one of the most harmonious tongues of modern Europe ; and there is a charm in that harmony of language, in its connection with the imagination, at which reason and philosophy is sometimes indignant. Many a very sensible and clever man has puzzled himself to divine how it is that the songs of the *Troubadours*, though very much inferior in reason and in wit to the compositions of their more northern

neighbours, the *Trouveres*, have obtained a much higher reputation, and still retain their hold upon the public mind. There may be many causes for this fact, but one of those causes undoubtedly is, the superior harmony of the *Langue d'Oc* over the *Langue d'Oil*.

However that may be, every thing around Figeac and its neighbourhood spoke not alone of the early days of the good olden time, but of early days in their brightest aspect — early days in their sunshine and calmness; for, alas! those early feudal days had also their clouds and their storms. The people of the district were not numerous, but food was plenty amongst them, and therefore they might well be contented; for although plenty will not always produce content, yet very seldom, if ever, is content found without it. Neither was the population very thin: there were few moors or wastes of any kind, though the woodlands were extensive; but those woodlands, it must be recollected, were amongst the richest districts of the province. In the skirts of the forests, however, as well as in other places, were

numerous villages and hamlets, and often in the heart of the wood itself appeared a neat cottage, always placed in the best and most picturesque situation on the top of some high bank, or on the slope of some gentle hill, where the advantages of air, and shelter, and dryness were all combined. No bad indication of the character of the peasantry of any particular country is to be found in the situation of the hamlets and cottages; and in these respects the positions chosen by the people in that neighbourhood harmonised well with their ordinary tastes and feelings.

The soil in general was dry and wholesome, and that part which was given up to the production of timber was generally the broken ground which it would have been difficult to reduce to form and shape by any effort of the ploughshare. No regularity had prevailed in the art of planting during those remote centuries when the seeds of the oaks and beeches that grew around Castelneau were sown — if indeed the woods themselves were not remnants of the old primeval forests which once covered

the whole face of the country — and thus the greatest picturesque beauty was to be found in the forest ground. The rest of the land, it is true, was very beautiful also; but often from the edges of the wood were to be seen bright glimpses of the open country, mingling with the fringe of green trees that skirted the hills and combining many sorts of natural beauty in one. The climate, too, in that part of France, is peculiarly fine; and although so many rivers and springs appear in every direction, very little rain falls, and the heavy clouds that sometimes gather round float slowly past to higher regions, and pour their showers upon the tops of the distant mountains. It thus becomes a land of gleams, where the sunshine and the shadow seem constantly playing with each other, and running bright races over the green hill sides.

Amongst such scenes were passed the years of Annette de St. Morin, from the time she was ten years of age till the time she was eighteen; and, as I have stated before, those gleams, and woods, and hills, and vallies, and bright

streams, had no unimportant part in her education. They fixed her tastes, and even in some degree formed her character.

Few of the châteaux in the neighbourhood of that of Castelneau were inhabited. Many were in ruins; and the two nearest houses which dignified themselves with such a title, and were yet tenanted by any thing better than bats and owls, lay at the distance of more than five miles from it and from each other. One of these was situated not far from the banks of the Lot, and was in every respect very different from the château of Castelneau. It had been built by a marquis, in the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV., and had been embellished by his successor under the regency. The genealogical tree of the family was said not to be one of the tallest in the forest, though the branches had become very numerous of late years; nor were the roots supposed to be very pure, at least no one had ever clearly ascertained into what soil they shot. The château itself was exactly what might be expected from the age in which it was built, and the person who built it.

It was all glass within and without. The windows were like what are termed goggle eyes, much too large, in short, for the size of the place. There were also a great number too many for the small masses of masonry that supported them; and to make these masses look the more flimsy, the skilful artist had not contented himself till he had covered them with plaster panels and arabesques. Tall stone pinnacles and balls covered the tops of each of the piers; a whole host of Cupids had been squandered upon different parts of the stone-work, and innumerable baskets of flowers afforded the little god of love something to do. The house was seated upon a raised platform, and every means was employed by manifold flights of shallow steps to weary the visiter in approaching the dwelling of the Marquis de Cajare.

The interior resembled the outside in ornament and decoration. There was not a panel without some painting upon it, not in the best taste in the world; and the ceilings and staircases were filled with Neptunes and Apollos, Cupids and Venuses, Tritons and Nereids.

Manifold looking-glasses ornamented the walls, and the columns that supported the ceilings were fluted with blue glass. In the winter-time the house would have been intolerably cold; but it was only during about three months in the very height of summer that the marquis and the marquise, after having talked to every body in Paris of their château on the Lot, came down, with a select few of their acquaintances, to languish through the space allotted to a dull country life.

The family of the marquis consisted of himself and his wife, one son and one daughter. The latter was somewhat older than Annette de St. Morin; handsome, too, and not without a certain degree of cleverness, but full of frivolity, conceit, and pretension. She had thus all the qualities requisite to attract the admiration of the youth of Paris; and people were beginning to marvel that Mademoiselle de Cajare, now approaching her twentieth year, had not formed some splendid alliance. However, things in general were managed in Paris at that time in a very different manner from the

arrangements of the present day. The young lady had little or nothing to do in the affair but to submit, and all the other particulars were arranged between her parents and the person to be coupled to herself for life, or, more often still, between them and his parents. This, indeed, was not always the case; for there never yet was a time — either in France or any other country — in which love-matches were not occasionally made, as is shown by the very distinction drawn in the language between the *mariage d'amour*, and the *mariage de convenance*.

It may be supposed, then, that in the society in which Mademoiselle de Cajare moved, the *mariage de convenance* was much more customary than any other sort of alliance; and it began to be rumoured in the circles of Paris, that the marquis himself had not been so explicit in naming the dowry of his daughter as was desirable to the young gallants of the capital. Yet he lived in the highest and most profuse style; and his son, who was serving with the army on the Rhine, never found any want of

means to gratify whatever whim or caprice might come into the head of a spoilt child of fortune.

The marquis himself was every thing that had been the pink of perfection some thirty years before. He was, consequently, somewhat out of date, according to the manners of the day; and his graces had a degree of stiffness which occasionally excited the merriment of the *dégagée* youth which filled the saloons of the metropolis. The marquise was what the people of her own time called a sweet, interesting woman, as heartless as it was possible to conceive, and of course as selfish. She had a certain sort of common sense, or rather, I should say, discernment, about her, which made her perceive when she first set out in life, some six or seven and twenty years before, that as she had not enough ready wit to be *piquante*, she must assume the interesting and sentimental; and this having become her habitual style, she continued to languish and to sigh, and to look tender and beseeching, till all her charms began perceptibly to pass away,

and the necessity of giving them a little heightening became more and more apparent every day. She took the hint which her looking-glass afforded; superinduced additional portions of red or white, in various places, as the case required; arranged the eyebrows with the nicest care, and added a lock here and there amongst her hair, where “time, who steals our years away,” had stolen her tresses too.

Such was one of the châteaux in the neighbourhood of Castelneau, and such was the family to which it belonged. There was another, however, at about the same distance in a different direction. It was situated in that higher, if not more mountainous district about Fons and St. Medard, and was as much the reverse of the château of Cajare in its site and appearance, as in the character of its inhabitants. In the jargon of the country it was called Castel Nogent, and the name of the gentleman who inhabited it was the Baron de Nogent. He was at this time an old man, but older indeed in appearance than in reality, for care had had its hand upon him as well as time.

His hair was as white as snow, and his figure, which had once been tall and powerful, was now thin and somewhat bent. He was not, however, more than sixty years of age; and his countenance, though worn and somewhat pale, bore a noble and lofty look; but withal there was an expression of melancholy, nay, of almost hopelessness, about it, which was permanent, mingling with every other expression — even with a smile.

The château was one of the old dwelling-houses of the country, not of so antique a date, indeed, as that of Castelneau, but still carrying its origin back for many centuries, and built upon the foundations of an older mansion, all record of the erection of which was lost in the lapse of time. It was not nearly so large as the château of Castelneau, and indeed never had been, but still it was a large building, and would have afforded ample accommodation for a numerous family and a splendid train. By such, however, it was not tenanted; for the baron himself had seen his wife — whom he had wedded from pure affection, and had never

ceased to love — wither away ere she had been his more than four years, leaving him not exactly alone, for he had one son, but solitary in heart, and depressed by manifold misfortunes. The train of the baron, too, was very small; for his father had made great sacrifices for his king and for his country, and had, of course, met with neither reward nor remuneration. The baron also had suffered severe losses of property from accidental causes; and the château, not being half filled, was falling in some parts into decay.

The scenery round it was very beautiful, full of woods, and rocks, and streams; and, in a part which had been formerly reserved as a hunting park for the château itself, rose one of the heads of the small river Cere, rushing at once from a deep basin in the rock in a jet of nearly four feet in diameter.

The Abbé de Castelneau, as soon as he assumed the title of count, and took possession of the castles and estates, was immediately visited in great state by all the gentry of the neighbourhood, with the exception of the Baron

de Nogent. With grave and deliberate slowness he returned those visits, affording no great encouragement either by his words or manner to any attempt at intimacy. He waited for some time for the baron's call; but as that nobleman did not appear, he proceeded in his old postchaise, drawn by the two mules, for which he retained an unwavering regard, to visit his solitary neighbour. The baron received him without any appearance of discomfort or surprise, but also without any show of pleasure.

"Monsieur de Nogent," said the count, "we of Castelneau and you of Nogent have been friends for two hundred years, and perhaps longer—I see not why, it should not be so still."

"There is but one reason, count," replied the baron — "the house of Castelneau is rich, the house of Nogent is poor, and they meet not upon the same terms as in other days."

"If riches could make any difference in regard, sir," replied the count, "friendship would be a thing not worth the trouble of coming two leagues from Castelneau to seek.

I have shown you that I value it more highly than you seem to do: if you do not really hold it lightly, you will come to Castelneau in return."

The baron smiled faintly. "I do not hold it lightly, indeed," he replied; "and since such are your feelings, Monsieur de Castelneau, I will, of course, return your visit with pleasure. But I have so long avoided all society, from causes too painful for me to enter into, that I fear you will find but a dull and cheerless neighbour, though not from estimating friendship at a low rate, or undervaluing high abilities when I meet with them."

Some farther conversation took place, and the count inquired after the baron's son, whom he remembered a beautiful boy some ten or twelve years before.

"He is now," replied the baron, "one of the king's pages, and I hope ere another year be over, to hear that he is serving his country in the field."

The count wished the young gentleman success; and after remaining a reasonable time,

in order to suffer all strangeness to wear off, he took his leave, and returned to the château of Castelneau. His visit called forth another immediately from the baron, who spoke and acted with less reserve than he had previously done, and mentioned his intention of proceeding very soon to Paris, in order to see his son equipped for the army.

Not long after, the Count de Castelneau proceeded to the town of Cahors for some time, to settle various matters of business connected with the inheritance which had just fallen to him. He took Annette with him; and on their return, he found that the Baron de Nogent and his son had called during their absence. He immediately returned their visit without a moment's loss of time; but he found the old nobleman now alone, his son having returned to Paris in order to join the army.

From that time forth the years slipped by without any incident of importance chequering the intercourse between the Baron de Nogent and the Count de Castelneau. They met sometimes twice, sometimes three times in the course

of each year, but not oftener; and towards the latter end of the eighteen years of which we have lately been speaking, when the baron visited the château of Castelneau, his eyes would frequently rest for a moment or two upon the beautiful countenance of Annette de St. Morin, with a look of thoughtful inquiry, as if something puzzled him and set his mind busily to work.

CHAP. XI.

As each human heart is a world in itself, and we have in this book more than one heart to deal with, it would take a whole constellation of such books to describe with any degree of minuteness and precision all the different points and particulars of the characters we have had under review, and the changes which took place therein in the space of the eighteen years so frequently referred to. We have done our best, however, in a short space, to give some idea of the characters of the Count of Castelneau and his adopted child Annette de St. Morin, together with a general view of the circumstances which surrounded them; and however imperfectly all this may have been accomplished, it is time that we should proceed to make the personages speak and act for themselves.

We have told the generous reader — who is

quite willing to believe that every thing we do tell him is true — that during the three or four hours in the middle of the day which the Count de Castelneau thought fit to spend alone in solitary thought, Mademoiselle de St. Morin would wander forth through the bright scenery in the neighbourhood. During these excursions she was sometimes on horseback, followed by numerous attendants — for although the count was so simple in all his own habits, he never suffered her to want any of the outward appearances of rank and high station — but often on foot, and then, generally unaccompanied. She was fond of indulging her own thoughts; and, though sometimes the sunny side of the breezy hill would fill her with high spirits, and tempt her to gallop her fleet Limousin jennet for many a mile over the broken turf, yet, towards eighteen years of age, she generally returned ere long to the more thoughtful mood, and whiled away the hours with fancies of her own. It may be asked, what were those fancies? I cannot tell: nor could she herself have told. All the small particulars

that she knew of the world, and of nature, and of her own heart, danced in the light of a happy mind like motes in a ray of sunshine. Each glittered as it passed through the beam, disappeared, and was forgotten; but others still succeeded, and all derived brilliance from the cheerful ray through which they floated, so long as they were within its influence.

There might be, at those times, within that young bosom the wish to be beloved by some kindred spirit, filled with bright thoughts and high aspirations like her own. Such things might well and naturally be in her heart; for it had been a principle of him who had taught her all which she knew, to set her the example of that truth which he required from her, and to deceive her in nothing. He strove, to the very best of his power, to give to all things their right estimate; and he sought not in any degree to conceal from her that love was before her as an inevitable part of her destiny, a thing that was to form an epoch in her existence, though not to absorb within itself the thoughts and feelings of her life. He

guarded her mind from dwelling upon that idea, it is true, by supplying her with plenty of other matter for thought; but still youth, and nature, and all those sweet and bright, but vague and shadowy, hopes, which form the atmosphere of love, might well have place within her breast.

She was thus one day wandering on, at the distance of a few miles from the château of Castelneau, when feeling somewhat weary with the warmth of a bright day in the end of May, she sat down to rest on a cushion of green moss that rose round the silvery roots of a tall beech tree in the woods. At the distance of perhaps twenty yards from where she sat was a small, narrow, sandy road, leading through the woods from Maridal to Figeac; and, flowing along, on the other side of the road, was a bright clear stream, which a few miles farther on plunged into the Lot. The beech tree was one of peculiar beauty, with long bending arms dropping over the ground below, as if to canopy that mossy cushion from the sun; and, up behind again, sloped far away the green bank, studded here and there with old

trees casting deep shadows round them, but leaving bright gleams of sunshine upon the more open expanse of forest turf. On the right, about twenty yards from the spot where Annette sat, and at the same distance from the road, was an old Gothic cross with a Latin inscription upon it, and at its foot appeared a fountain in a stone basin, richly ornamented by some hand which had long been dust.

I have dwelt on the description of this scene for many reasons, but for none more than because in it occurred more than one event affecting the happiness of Annette de St. Morin. Thus often does it happen in the strange mysterious existence of man, that certain spots seem to have a fate attached to them, sometimes as the scenes of those greater events that affect nations and worlds, sometimes only as the places where occurrences, marking the particular destiny of individuals, happen from time to time. How many a field of battle has seen various contending armies pass over them at far remote periods — how many houses and palaces contain within them the record of many a great

and terrible event. How often does it happen to us individually, that on the same spot, where the course of our existence has once been changed by some of the great marking occurrences of life, we have again and again met with change of fortune for good or for evil.

Annette de St. Morin sat there and mused ; and if any thing at that time in the whole expanse of her sunny mind could bear the name of gloom, we might say that she was more melancholy than usual. The subject of her thoughts was serious. As she looked at the bright stream that flowed by her, it presented to her mind — as the rippling course of a river has naturally done to almost every one when gazing on it intently — an image of human life ; and the bright waters, as they flowed by her, seemed to carry on her thoughts into the future. What was to be her own fate and destiny ? she asked herself ; where the dark and unseen end of that existence, which now passed as brightly and peacefully as the sparkling waters before her eyes ? Then again her mind turned to the past ; and like one gazing up towards the

top of a mountain, she could trace step by step the way back towards infancy, where gradually all minute objects were blended together, and the eyes of memory rested at last upon a faint blue point scarcely distinguishable from the sky.

As she was thus thinking, perhaps asking her own heart who were her parents, what her fate by birth, and what her previous history, the noise of wheels, and the voice of a driver encouraging his horses, were heard at some little distance in the wood. Those sounds roused Annette from her reverie, but did not in any degree scare or alarm her. All was so peaceful in the country round; violence and wrong were so seldom heard of in that district, that she entertained no apprehension of any kind, and only drawing the veil, which was over her head, somewhat more closely round her face, she sat still while the carriage came slowly forward, watching it with some degree of interest as it approached.

It was a plain but handsome vehicle, according to the fashion of that day, with tall

flat sides and a moulding at the top; and it was drawn, as was then customary, by four horses, driven by one coachman; but what was somewhat strange for a vehicle of that kind, no lackey appeared, either beside the driver or at the back of the carriage. The sandiness of the road seemed the cause of the slowness of its progression, for the vehicle was weighty, and the wheels sunk deep in the soft ground. The horses, however, were strong, and appeared quite able to draw it to the firmer road which lay about a mile farther on; but just as the carriage was passing the spot where Annette sat, a gentleman put his head out of the window, and bade the coachman stop and let the horses rest a while.

The driver immediately obeyed, and dismounted from his box; and the gentleman who had spoken opened the door of the carriage and got out. Had he been a young man, or a man of a gay aspect, Annette de St. Morin might have felt inclined to rise and wend her way homeward; but such was not at all the case, and she remained quietly seated where

she was, thinking that in a minute or two the vehicle would move on.

The gentleman who had descended from the carriage seemed to be between forty and fifty years of age, but nearer to the latter than the former period: he was tall, well proportioned, and graceful, but his hair, which had once been very dark, was thickly mingled with grey. His countenance was good, and not gloomy, though thoughtful; and his dress, which was black, was of the best materials, and made in the best fashion. As soon as he had set his foot to the ground, he offered his hand to a lady who was within, and who likewise descended from the vehicle. She was considerably younger than himself, apparently about five or six and thirty years of age; and as Annette's eyes rested upon her, she thought that she had never beheld a more interesting being. She was still very beautiful, though the first graces of youth were past; and there was an expression of sadness on her countenance, which, though it could not exactly be said to harmonise with the style of her features, was perhaps the more

touching from appearing on a face well calculated to express gay and joyous lightness of heart.

The lady spoke a few words to the gentleman beside her, which Annette did not hear, and the eyes of both fixed for a moment upon Mademoiselle de St. Morin. As they saw, however, that she averted her face and made a movement as if to rise and depart, they both turned towards the fountain and the cross, and the lady knelt before the latter, and appeared to repeat a prayer. The gentleman had turned round twice to look at Annette; and in the mean time a second lady, extremely well dressed, but by no means bearing the distinguished air of the other, had come forth from the carriage, and was gazing likewise at the fair girl who was seated on the bank.

This double scrutiny somewhat discomposed Mademoiselle de St. Morin, and she now rose for the purpose of returning to the château; but at that moment the gentleman approached her with rapid steps, and bowing low, with an uncovered head, he said, "I beg a thousand

pardons for interrupting you ; but allow me to ask, if, in passing along this road, we do not go very near to the fine old château of Castelneau."

There was something so respectful and courteous in the gentleman's tone, that if Annette had felt any thing like annoyance at being gazed at, it passed away immediately, and she replied with a smile, "You go directly before the gates on the way to Figeac. In fact, you can go no other way."

"Can you tell me," continued the gentleman, looking back to the lady who had now finished her prayer and was approaching — "Can you tell me if strangers may be permitted to see the interior of it without disturbing the family, which I believe is numerous?"

"Nay, you are mistaken," answered Annette ; "the family is any thing but numerous, consisting only of the count and Mademoiselle de St. Morin."

"Mademoiselle de St. Morin," said the gentleman again, "is, I think ——"

"A ward of the Count de Castelneau," re-

plied Annette; "but I must not let you go on farther," she added: "I am Annette de St. Morin."

The lady who had been kneeling before the cross had, during the latter part of this brief dialogue, come close to the speakers; and Annette, though looking principally towards the person who addressed her, had remarked a strange degree of agitation in his female companion. She was not a little surprised and confounded, however, when, at the words she had last spoken, the lady—giving way to some internal emotion, which seemed suddenly to overpower all her efforts to resist it—cast herself upon Annette's neck, and kissing her again and again, mingled her caresses with many tears, in which joy and sorrow had both evidently a part.

In vain the gentleman who accompanied her laid his hand upon her arm, saying, "Remember, oh, remember!" and the other lady coming up, exclaimed, "Have a care, dear madam, have a care." The lady's emotions were evidently not to be restrained; and she

wept upon Annette's bosom, sobbing as if her heart would break, and from time to time pressing her lips upon her cheek and upon her brow. Then again she would dash the drops from her eyes, and gaze in the young lady's face, and then would burst into tears, and lean her head upon her shoulder. On her part, as may well be supposed, Annette was agitated as well as surprised. She knew not, she could not divine what was the cause of the emotion that she beheld; but yet there was something in that lady's look, and tone, and manner, which wakened strange feelings in her heart — feelings of tenderness, and interest, and affection, which she could not account for; and, greatly moved herself, all she could say was, "What is it? Pray tell me, what is it? What is the meaning of all this?"

Nobody answered her for some time; while the gentleman whispered a few words from time to time to the lady, who was thus strangely agitated, and endeavoured gently to draw her away. At length, however, he said, in reply to Annette's repeated question, "You are very like this

lady's daughter, mademoiselle, whose name was Annette also, so that the sight of you and the sound of that name have troubled her a little. She seems to forget, for the time, that you are not the young lady she lost. She will be better in a moment or two, and then will be sorry for having agitated you."

Annette looked at the lady's dress; and though that of the gentleman might certainly pass for mourning, his fair companion was habited in all the bright and delicate colours which were then fashionable in the Parisian world. There was not much time, however, for observation, for the lady now seemed to recover herself; and gazing upon Annette with a look of sad but deep interest, she said in a tone of greater composure, I beg your pardon, young lady, I fear I have agitated you. You look like one that is very happy, and I pray to God that you may never know unhappiness."

"I am very happy," replied Annette, "and I can scarcely foresee any thing that should make me unhappy, for I have the kindest and the best of guardians, who leaves nothing un-

done to insure my present and my future happiness."

"Is he kind to you?" exclaimed the lady eagerly. "Is he kind to you? Then may God of heaven bless him! — may Heaven bless," she added more composedly, "every one who is kind to those who are placed under their charge!"

As she thus spoke, the gentleman again whispered something to her, and seemed to urge her eagerly, for she replied, at length, "Well, well, I will come — but remember, it is but a moment out of a life;" and again turning to Annette, she added, "Forgive me, sweet girl, if I have frightened and agitated you: we shall meet again, I trust, some time, even in this world, so pray remember me."

"I will, indeed, dear lady," replied Annette; "but by what name can I remember you?"

The gentleman held up his finger to her, as if to beg her to ask no questions; and the lady, after gazing in her face earnestly, once more embraced her, kissing her cheek again and again. Then turning away with bitter tears, she re-

entered the carriage, merely murmuring the words, "Adieu, adieu!" The other lady then kissed Annette's cheek likewise, saying in a low tone, "You may some day know more;" and the gentleman returning from the side of the carriage bade her adieu respectfully ere he withdrew.

When he had handed in the last of the two ladies, Annette was not a little surprised to hear him turn to the coachman and say, as if he were thoroughly acquainted with every step of the country round, "As soon as you have passed the castle gates, take the second broad road to the left, and go on as fast as you can till you reach the town of Maur."

Thus saying, he sprang into the vehicle, shut the door behind him, and the coachman driving on, the whole party were soon out of sight. Annette walked slowly back to the château, to tell the Count of Castelneau what had occurred; but to her surprise she found, that, contrary to his usual habits, he had gone out on horseback in the middle of the day, and had not even said when he would return.

CHAP. XII.

It was many hours before the count returned to the château ; when he did so, he entered the room where Annette was sitting with his usual calm and sedate step, and with a brow on which it was scarcely possible to perceive that there was any emotion, either angry, sorrowful, or joyous. As much as he ever smiled, he smiled on greeting the child of his adoption ; but as soon as he had seated himself, he despatched the servant, who threw open the door of the saloon for him, to summon the porter of the great gates to his presence. The count had passed the man as he entered ; and the summons seemed to him so strange, and was so unusual, that though his master was kind and placable, he turned somewhat pale at the thought of having excited his anger.

“ Who has been here since I went out, Victor,” said the count in a mild tone, as soon as he appeared.

“No one, my lord,” replied the porter; “not a soul has passed the gates but mademoiselle, and the boy from the fish-ponds with some fine carp.”

“Indeed!” replied the count: “bethink yourself, Victor; for I wish you to be very accurate.”

The man still remained firm in the same story, however; and the count then asked if the boy from the fish-ponds had gone back again.

“Oh yes, directly, my lord,” replied the porter. “When he had passed the gates and crossed the court, he took the fish to the wicket at the buttery door, where François, the cook’s man, took them from him; and he came back directly.”

The count mused for a moment or two, and then inquired, “Have you remarked any one pass by the gates of the château? I saw the fresh marks of carriage-wheels as I came along the road.”

“There was a carriage, my lord, about three hours ago,” replied the porter, “with three brown horses and a grey one.”

“What were the colours of the liveries?” said the count.

“There were no liveries at all, monseigneur,” replied the porter: “the coachman had a grey coat on, and a club wig as thick as my arm; but there was not a single lackey with the coach.”

In answer to some farther questions from his master, he proceeded to say that the vehicle had driven past as fast as possible, without pausing for a moment, even to let the party which it contained take a view of the castle, which was a high misdemeanour in the porter's eyes; the château of Castelneau being, in his estimation, the very finest edifice that the skill and ingenuity of man ever succeeded in raising from the earth. The information, however, seemed to satisfy the count, who nodded his head, saying, “That will do;” and the porter, well contented with the event of his interrogation, retired from the presence of his lord.

Annette had longed to speak and detail all she knew of the people in the carriage; but naturally courtesy had prevented her from in-

interrupting the count till he had done ; and then before she could speak, he turned to her saying, " Something very strange has occurred to me to-day, Annette."

" And to me, also," she replied, with a smile ; " but I interrupt you, my dear father. What were you saying ?"

" Merely," he answered, " that something very strange has occurred, which, unless it be explained hereafter, I suppose I must look upon as the silliest of all idle jests. I received a letter almost immediately after you left me yesterday, calling me to Figeac upon important business. The matter to be treated of, namely, the purchase of the neighbouring estate of Merle, was distinctly mentioned. My own lawyer and notary, I was told, would both meet me at the inn ; and, in fact, there was no room to suspect that I was deceived. I therefore set out as the letter requested me ; but found nobody waiting, and no sign of preparation for my coming. This struck me as strange ; but after waiting half an hour, lest men should say I am impatient, I sent for the notary, who lives

in the town, you know, and then found that he had not the slightest acquaintance with the matter. The lawyer was then sent for, and as he lives as far off as Lavignac, I was detained long before he came. When he did at length appear, I found that he was as ignorant of the whole transaction as the notary, and, mounting my horse, I rode back hither as fast as possible. But say, my dear child, what is this strange thing that has happened to you which you thus speak of? You have not been robbed, I trust, my Annette? For one can surely walk forth in peace on the banks of the Selle, if any where."

"Oh no," replied Annette, "nothing of that kind, but something, if not as unpleasant, at least as unusual," and she proceeded to relate all that had occurred to her. If she softened any thing, it was not intentionally, and the count obtained a very accurate knowledge of all that had taken place.

As he listened, his countenance for once was moved; and Annette could see much agitation in his look: more, indeed, than she had ever seen upon his face before. Ere she had done,

the count had started up from his seat, and began pacing up and down the room. Annette was astonished and alarmed to see such emotion in one so calm; and rising also, she approached and twined her beautiful arms round her father by adoption, saying in an anxious tone, "I fear that my story has grieved you: I hope I have not done wrong."

"Far from it, my dear child," replied the count: "you could but act as you did act; but still, there may be many matters in the tale that may, and that do grieve me. You know, Annette, that you are not my child; you know, however, that you are as much the child of my love as if you were one of my own offspring, and you can guess how terrible it would be for me to lose you."

"Oh, but that will never be," cried Annette. "You do not think that any body could persuade me to leave you?"

The abbé looked in her face and smiled. He smiled, partly because the assurance gave him pleasure; and yet, strange to say, it was partly because he knew how vain such an as-

surance was. He did not deceive himself: he knew the time might come, and probably would come, when even deeper and stronger affections than those which bound Annette to him would take possession of her heart, and when, without loving him less, she would love another more, and of course follow the strongest attachment. He smiled, however, kindly; and as he gazed in that lovely face for a moment, sensations, regrets, visions, if they may be so called, crossed his mind, from which he instantly turned away his thoughts. In that brief space of time, however, the tempting spirit which ever lies at the bottom of the human heart seized the moment of tenderness to whisper, that he might have been very happy with Annette, not as the child of his adoption, but as the bride of his heart if years and circumstances had permitted such a thing to be possible. It is a peculiar characteristic of all the suggestions of the dark and subtle enemy of God and man, that each word which the heart is weak enough to receive is written in characters of flame that can never be erased, but which still remain clear

and distinct whenever the mind rests upon them; till line after line is added thereunto by the persevering fiend, and the temptation becomes overpowering and complete. This was the first time that such a thought had ever crossed the count's mind, and he instantly turned away his eyes from it as if it were an absolute profanation. He almost scorned himself to have admitted the very idea of it into his mind; yet it had an effect upon him — but that effect was, for the time at least, noble, and high, and pure. From that day forth he became somewhat less familiar with his adopted child. He would kiss her brow and cheek when they met, or when they parted, but he touched not her lips, he held her not to his bosom, as he had been accustomed to do: he felt as if it would be unholy so to do, after that thought had once entered into his heart; and though it was a painful punishment for one involuntary idea, yet he regarded it as a penance, and endured it with firmness. But he did more, as we shall soon see when I return to the course of the story, which I have somewhat outrun already.

It very rarely happens, indeed, that a conversation of great interest proceeds to its close without interruption. There seems a fatality in it; and every one must have felt how trifles of the most unimportant kind, how importunate babblers and frivolous coxcombs, are constantly permitted, or sent by fate, to break in upon those conferences on which hangs the weal or woe of our whole existence. The conversation between the Count de Castelneau and Mademoiselle de St. Morin had just reached the point at which we stopped in detailing it, when, from the window of the saloon, the count beheld a carriage with six beautiful horses, together with manifold lackeys on horseback and on foot, enter the gates, which had been thrown open to admit them, and pass onward across the court to the principal door of the château.

His countenance resumed all its calmness in a moment. "This is the family of Cajare, Annette," he said: "I heard they had arrived when I was at Figeac; but I dreamed not they would have made us a visit to-day, and could

well have spared it. We must do the best to entertain them, however; for courtesy is a duty, my dear child, even to those we do not like or esteem."

"Oh, I dislike Madame de Cajare very much," said Annette.

"And I her husband as much," replied the abbé.

Speeches like these but too often precede, in the false and hollow-hearted world in which we live, the entrance of visitors who are received with the most marked and flattering attention, with bright smiles and professions of delight. Such, however, was not the case with the Count de Castelneau and Annette de St. Morin. The first advanced to meet his guests with slow and stately politeness, inquired after the health of the marquis and marchioness, trusted they had been well since he had seen them, now a period of two years, and hoped that they had greatly enjoyed the pleasures of Paris, but did not even express pleasure at seeing them.

"Ah, Monsieur de Castelneau," said the lady, in a languid tone, "you know that these

dreadful vapours from which I suffer never leave me much happiness. If there be any thing that I can hope for in life, it is but to pass the rest of my days in a gentle melancholy, without being assailed by any deep grief or great misfortune. — Ah! Mademoiselle de St. Morin, how charming you are! I declare you become more lovely every day. Why during the last few months what a change and improvement has taken place in your beauty!”

Annette coloured slightly, and replied courteously, but still coldly. The marquise, however, who was always quite satisfied with every thing she did herself, perceived in Annette's manner but that graceful indifference which is always cultivated in courts and great cities by those persons who, having nothing in heart or mind to distinguish them, are forced to make the most of those accidental circumstances of rank and fortune which they either really possess or assume. Such, indeed, was the combination of graces of person and demeanour, with a chilling coldness which could not be concealed, in Annette's reception of the Marchioness de

Cajare, that the latter lady marvelled in her own heart, and asked herself where that country girl could have acquired such a distinguished air and manner.

While the two ladies had thus been conversing, Monsieur de Castelneau had been engaged in paying some attention to the marquis; and he now turned round, saying to Annette, "My dear child, we are to be honoured with the company of Monsieur and Madame de Cajare to-night: they will do us the honour of supping with us, and sleeping at the château. You had better, therefore, summon good Donnine, and give orders that apartments be immediately prepared for our distinguished guests."

Madame de Cajare and Monsieur de Cajare made a thousand formal apologies; declared that Mademoiselle de St. Morin would think them the most rude and uncereemonious people in the world; but explained that they were on their way to pay a visit to the small town of Fons, and that one of their horses having cast a shoe, and detained them till that late hour, Madame de Cajare was far too timid to pass

through the woods in the growing obscurity which was now fast falling over the world.

This statement might be true or it might not, but the Count de Castelneau certainly did not believe it. However, old Donnine, having been summoned to Annette's aid, now appeared in a gown of rich silk brocade, attired with infinitely more smartness than her mistress, though withal in garments well suited to her age; and Annette, having spoken a word or two to her faithful old attendant, quitted the room with her for a moment, to insure that every thing should be done to make their unexpected guests comfortable.

As soon as the young lady and the good old nurse were gone, Madame de Cajare exclaimed, "What a charming creature!" and the count, with a certain spice of malice, which remained from his former habits notwithstanding all his efforts, chose to misunderstand, and applied the words of the marquise to the good old Donnine.

"A very charming creature, indeed," he replied, in a grave and somewhat solemn tone:

“she was first my ward’s nurse, and has since been raised to the dignity of *gouvernante* of the château.”

The marquise explained, and the count bowed, but gave no farther encouragement to the praises of Annette. The evening passed by, upon the whole, cheerfully: the marquis himself, if he could not be called either a gay, a witty, or a sensible man, being overloaded with the phrases and the common-places of the world and the times. There was no subject on earth in regard to which he could not say something; and being neither diffident of his own powers, nor slow in delivering his own opinions, he himself supplied conversation of a certain kind wherever he went. He neither required nor accepted much assistance, very often answering his own questions as soon as they were asked; and the count found it very easy to entertain a person who was thus willing to play two hands in a game of chit-chat with himself. The marquis tried hard, in the course of the evening, to induce his host to play with him; for gambling was at that time a disease

in the city of Paris, with which Monsieur de Cajare was very much afflicted. The count, however, remained firm, and declined, saying, with one of his doubtful smiles, that he had left off gaming when he quitted the church. The want of that sort of entertainment might have made the evening seem somewhat long to the guests of the château de Castelneau, had not the marquise, who perhaps might have some suspicion that her husband wished for a private conversation with his entertainer, retired to her apartment almost immediately after supper, accompanied by Mademoiselle de St. Morin, to do the honours of the house.

No sooner was she gone than Monsieur de Cajare laid regular siege to the mind of the count, seeking to draw from him, by one means or another, some account of Annette, and her prospects in life. He began by accounting for the absence of his daughter, who would be so delighted, he assured the count, to cultivate the acquaintance of Mademoiselle de St. Morin, by stating that she had remained at the château of Cajare in order to receive her brother the baron,

who was expected every hour from Paris. He then proceeded once more to comment upon Annette's beauty ; but the count listened in silence, without even replying by a look.

At length the marquis ventured upon a bold stroke, and exclaimed, as if he had known well the person of whom he was speaking, " Ah, poor Monsieur de St. Morin ! he was in very bad circumstances, I fear, when he died."

" Annette's father was not rich," replied the count.

" I feared so — I feared so," said the marquis : " he was an excellent man."

" A very good man, indeed," replied the count, with the same cynical smile.

" I fear he has not left her very well provided for," said the marquis.

Monsieur de Castelneau had a very great inclination not to answer at all, as he saw clearly through the views and purposes with which these suppositions were put forward. The evil spirit did not lose the opportunity, and instantly suggested the question, " Shall I promote by any means, even by a word, the

estrangement and the separation from myself of a being who has been for eighteen years the sunshine of my home and the light of my eyes? Shall I aid in uniting her to another by those tender ties which can never bind her to me?" But then the better spirit resumed its sway in a moment, and he said to himself, "Why should I stay it? why should I retard it even by a minute? Would I deprive her of all those blessings that I myself have never known — home, and happiness, and sweet domestic love? Would I thus repay her for having given comfort and consolation, ay, and almost even cheerfulness, to a wrung and sorrowful heart during eighteen years? No, no! Though, if this man's son be like the father, she is no bride for him, yet I may as well make it known to the greedy and covetous world that she is not the dowerless creature that people suppose."

Thought, which, like the fairy, compasses the round earth "ere the Leviathan can swim a league," had been as rapid as usual in conveying all these ideas through the mind of the count; so that the marquis remarked nothing

farther than one of those slight pauses which often preceded the reply of Monsieur de Castelleau to any thing that was said.

“ I really do not know,” replied the count, at length, “ what you consider not well provided for, Monsieur de Cajare. A gentleman of your great wealth and importance may consider Annette’s fortune a mere trifle ; but her dower will amount, at least, to sixty thousand livres per annum, perhaps to more ; and that will always enable her, as a single woman, to live in comfort, even if she should not marry.”

“ Oh, but she will marry to a certainty, monsieur,” exclaimed Monsieur le Comte de Cajare whose eyes sparkled with eagerness to secure the prize for his son : “ I am sure you could make an advantageous match for her at any time you thought fit to seek it.”

“ I shall in no degree seek it, Monsieur de Cajare,” replied the count, quickly, in order to prevent the other from saying more at that moment. “ You know I was some time ago in the neighbouring country of England. They are a strange mad-headed people, as you are

well aware. Torn to pieces by sects and factions in policy and religion; but amongst other odd notions, they have a belief, not universal, but very general amongst them, that a woman has something to do with her own marriage, and that it is consequently better to consult her inclinations. This I believe to be the reason why, in England, one man's wife is not always another man's mistress, as in France.* I liked the system so much, that I long ago determined Mademoiselle de St. Morin should marry whom she liked, and nobody but whom she liked; reserving to myself, as her guardian, the right of refusing her to any one whose morals, temper, or habits were certain to make her unhappy: — but you seem tired, Monsieur de Cajare, and would, I am sure, wish to retire. Allow me to show you the way. Jean! Pierre! Mathieu! here bring lights. Lights for Mon-

* It must be remembered that this cynical observation of Monsieur de Castelneau applied to the morals of a century ago, and even then was a great deal too general and sweeping, although quite in character with his sarcastic habit of expression, as will be seen whenever "The Maxims of the Count de Castelneau" shall be given to the public.

sieur le Marquis de Cajare ;” and then, after conducting Monsieur de Cajare to his apartments with the most formal politeness, he retired to his own chamber with his usual quiet step.

CHAP. XIII.

THE Marquis de Cajare did not quit the château of Castelneau without pressing the count and his fair ward to visit his dwelling. Somewhat to Annette's surprise the count did not hesitate a moment, but accepted the invitation at once, fixed the day for the visit, and seemed well disposed to be on terms of intimacy with a family which she knew he despised at heart. This sudden change in one whose character and demeanour showed in general an unalterable firmness, might well appear strange to poor Annette; but the secret was that, as we have shown, Monsieur de Castelneau had undergone a struggle with himself, and had gained a triumph.

In such circumstances there are few men who do not suffer the first moment of victory to carry them too far; and at that time the

count would willingly have given the hand of the fair girl whom he had brought up from infancy to any worthy man who sought it. Feelings of this kind, however, are generally as evanescent as they are strong; and before the third morning after the departure of the marquis and his family had arrived, the count began to regret the promise he had given.

The following day was to be spent at Cajare, and Monsieur de Castelneau would not make any false excuse; but he could not help commenting to Annette, in a few sarcastic words, upon the character of those they were about to visit. The marquis, he said, was a charlatan in his follies as well as in his wit; the marchioness as much a quack in sentiment as her husband was in the want of it. "I have had opportunities of seeing," he continued, "that this vice is hereditary. His father was the same as himself: the daughter has lost nothing of the gift by transmission. It is clearly an heir-loom, and the only one in the family—the son, surely, cannot be without it."

Annette made no reply, for it was seldom

that she saw her kind guardian in such a mood, and she loved him less in it. In truth, he had carefully restrained his own sarcastic nature ever since Annette had been with him; for he was unwilling to show her in one whom she loved and revered an example of any thing that he did not wish her to adopt. After a moment's pause, however, he added, "It would not surprise me, my Annette, if this youth were to become a suitor for your hand."

Annette smiled, and shook her head. There is an instinctive perception, regarding all the natural affections, in the mind of women, which, though they often willingly blind themselves to ardent love — as we shut our eyes against the full sunshine — yet shows them many a finer shade and more delicate hue of the same passion in a moment be it concealed however it may. In the few words the count had spoken, Annette perceived, at once, that there were apprehensions in his bosom lest she should be sought and won by the young Baron de Cajare; and though she tried not to investigate why the thought might be painful to him —

whether, because he thought the suitor unworthy of her, or because he liked not the prospect of losing her society — that answering smile and shake of the head spoke plainly, and were intended to speak, “There is no fear he should succeed.”

The count understood the smile, and bent down his eyes upon the ground with a meditative look, not very well satisfied that even a part of his feelings should be detected, and more determined than ever to overcome them. But as the evil spirit is well aware that man’s mind is a texture of ideas, he is quite satisfied with adding new ones of an evil kind, and working them intimately in and out, as a weaver works into the warp the thread upon his shuttle. Every time that the mind rests upon wrong, a new throw of that shuttle is taken, and the thread that it bears is the more thoroughly blended with the whole web of our thoughts.

On the subsequent day, early in the morning, the count and his adopted child set forth, and about an hour afterwards reached the great house of glass and gilding, called the Château

de Cajare. Their approach had been observed by the inhabitants ; and on the steps leading up to the chief entrance, appeared the Marquis de Cajare himself, with a young man of some six or seven and twenty years of age, splendidly dressed in the military costume of the day. He was handsome in countenance, graceful in person, not the least like the Marquis de Cajare in any respect ; and with an expression which, though not particularly marked in any way, was decidedly agreeable and prepossessing. He was rather grave than otherwise : there was none of the light smile about his lip which generally characterised the vain youth of the metropolis ; and as he bowed low on being introduced to the count and Mademoiselle de St. Morin, and followed with the former, while his father led the latter into the château by the tips of the fingers, his calm and gentlemanly demeanour, his handsome person, and superior tone of manners, made the count feel ten times more uncomfortable than if he had displayed all the idle frivolity and licentious emptiness of a *petit-maître* of those days.

Still, however, the Count de Castelneau struggled against such emotions; and as he walked on slowly up the steps, answering little more than monosyllables to the courteous words which the young officer addressed to him, he might be seen once or twice to close his teeth hard, as if to keep down the feelings that were within him. Before they had passed the threshold of the château, however, he had again triumphed over himself, and with admirable patience suffered himself to be led by Madame de Cajare and her daughter to take breakfast in a *bosquet*, which the marchioness informed him was dedicated to love and pensiveness. There was a fountain and an urn, and two or three Cupids, very naked, and somewhat over-fat about the lower part of the back, and there were inscriptions in verse below from the flowing pen of Mademoiselle de Cajare. The metre was not very good, nor the poetry; but there was a certain spice of wit in the composition, which was employed in such a manner as to leave the reader in doubt whether the fair writer was laughing at the Cupids or not.

Monsieur de Castelneau, on his part, read the verses, and treated them much in the same way as mademoiselle treated the Cupids, commenting upon them in a strain which left it very doubtful whether he did or did not admire them.

In the mean time, Annette, after having been welcomed in rapture by Mademoiselle de Cajare, had been conducted to the *bosquet* by the marquis. His son, also, had fallen back to her side; and though he did not press any very great attentions upon her, yet all he did say was gentlemanly, and high toned. Annette was struck and pleased; and certainly, if the Count de Castelneau had contrived a plan for making her fall in love with the Baron de Cajare, he could not have laid out the events more cunningly for that purpose, than by drawing such a picture of that gentleman as he had suggested to her mind, and then presenting such an extraordinary contrast in reality. Annette de St. Morin, however—though, from her inexperience, from the warmth and tenderness of her heart, from a bright imagination, and a thousand other qualities of the mind, she might very well fall in

love at first sight—paradoxical as it may seem, was not one to fall in love easily. It required many high qualities to win her affection, though her love would have been given in a moment, as soon as her heart was satisfied that those qualities were really possessed. Such was not the case with Monsieur de Cajare: though, in manners, appearance, conduct, he was altogether different from what she had expected, his conversation did not afford a sufficient insight into his thoughts to convince her that the heart was high, and noble, and generous, the mind bright, pure, and unsullied.

No event of importance took place throughout the day: to Annette it passed happily and cheerfully enough: indeed more so than any day she had spent in general society; for her happiest hours had always been those which she had passed with her father by adoption. The young officer, who contrived now to be a good deal by her side, had evidently a finished and refined taste, had an intimate acquaintance with the works of art in various countries, and had seen and known many of the most dis-

tinguished men of the day. He expressed his opinions, and he communicated his information, pleasantly and unobtrusively; and withal, he had that intelligent look, that meaning smile, which seems to pre-suppose a familiarity with our internal thoughts and feelings, and soon makes friends with the spirit within us.

Annette, on her part, neither encouraged nor repelled his attention; but, as I have said, the day passed pleasantly for her, till she saw very evidently that the Count de Castelneau was uneasy. She did not fully understand why this should be, but felt inclined to believe that he knew more of the Baron de Cajare than he had stated, and that what he did know was disadvantageous to that young nobleman. As soon as she perceived this, she listened with less satisfaction to the baron's conversation, and attached herself more closely to the side of the count. Monsieur de Castelnean remarked that she did so, and was pleased, it must be acknowledged, at the result; but at the same time was rather mortified that she had discovered his uneasiness. He did not wish that uneasiness to be

perceived, and would only have prevented her conversing farther with the young officer upon the condition of doing so without appearing to do it. To remove the impression as much as possible, however, his warmth of manner towards the baron increased as Annette became more cold ; and he ended, ere they took their departure, by inviting him in a hospitable tone to the château of Castelneau. The young officer bowed, and promised to take advantage of the invitation ; but the next day passed over without his coming, and the next. The third day he appeared ; and the count, pleased with his apparent indifference, treated him hospitably, and gave him no discouragement.

Advanced thus far, the Baron de Cajare did not fail to press his acquaintance more rapidly ; sometimes he saw the count alone, sometimes the count and Annette ; but there grew a tenderness in his manner towards Mademoiselle de St. Morin, a softness in his voice, a look of deep and thoughtful interest, which, every time that the count saw him, made his heart ache with painful anticipations. He struggled boldly

and firmly against his own feelings, however. He compared himself firmly with the young baron; and when he asked himself which was best calculated to win and to retain the love of a young, bright, ardent being, like Annette de St. Morin, he could not but acknowledge that it was not himself, though he felt within him depth of feeling and powers of mind which he knew the other did not possess. He determined that he would do nothing to stay the course of events; but every step in their progress now gave him agony. Although many painful thoughts were but too familiar with his mind, these seemed more painful still, or, at all events—piled up as they were upon other things—they seemed to render the load upon his bosom intolerable, and yet he would not fly from those thoughts; but, on the contrary, gave himself up to them in manifold solitary and painful fits of musing. He would walk forth long by himself; he would shut himself in his chamber from all society, even from that of Annette. He would ride out far through the lonely woods, or over the wild hills and moors, and

he would commune with and task his own heart, and accuse himself of gross, and bitter, and shameful selfishness; and often would he ask himself whether it were really possible that he was animated by any coarse and common passion towards a creature so pure, so sweet, so good, whom he had loved as his own child from infancy up to womanhood.

There, however, his own heart acquitted him, and the judge was just. No, he said, all that he sought was, that she should not leave him; that she should not love another better than him; that she should not take from him, to give to any one else, that affection which was the sole possession which his spirit valued, the only thing that he had ever really sought, or cared for, or loved, or prized. It had been balm to him when his heart was wounded and bleeding; it had been as a beautiful flower upon his pathway when all the rest of life had seemed a desert; it had been his one consolation, his hope, his trust; it had been, in short, his existence, for what is existence without affection?

One day, when he had been thus thinking

for many an hour, as he rode through some of the most beautiful parts of the neighbouring country, without taking any note of tree, or stone, or rock, or river, he returned at a quicker pace to the château of Castelneau, and found the Baron de Cajare sitting with Annette alone.

There was a slight flush on Mademoiselle de St. Morin's cheek, and the young officer was looking upon the floor, somewhat pale; but the count, though he paused a moment as he entered, and looked from the one to the other, made no observation; and seated himself near the window, bearing such an aspect that conversation was renewed with difficulty, and each subject was dropped again as soon as it was started. At length the baron rose, and taking his leave, mounted his horse in the court-yard, and rode away from the château. The count watched him from the window with a knitted brow and thoughtful eye; and then turning to Mademoiselle de St. Morin, he said, "Annette, my dear child ——."

But almost as he spoke, he turned deadly

pale—put his hand to his heart and then to his head—grasped ineffectually at the arm of a chair that stood near, and fell forward fainting upon the ground. Servants were speedily called: physicians were procured from Figeac and Cahors; but before they arrived, the count, having been stretched on a sofa, had recovered his recollection, and declared himself quite well. It proved, however, that he was not so; and he soon found that such was the case when he attempted to rise.

When the physicians came, they declared that he was not only seriously ill, but in much danger. It matters not what was the barbarous name that they gave to his complaint, their judgment was correct; and for nearly six weeks he was not permitted to quit the house, or to take any exercise but in moving slowly from his bedroom to the saloon. He was forbidden to read or to write; and the hours would have passed sadly and slowly, had it not been for the presence of Annette de St. Morin. She read to him, she sang to him, she played to him, she

gave up her whole thoughts to him alone. For many weeks she never set her foot beyond the doors, nor did she see any one but good old Donnine, who was the partner of her toils. Several times the family of Cajare applied for admittance when Annette was with the count, and twice they begged to speak with Mademoiselle de St. Morin if the count could not see them; but Annette distinctly and markedly refused.

The days passed on, as they will pass in sickness or in health, flying like the shadow of a cloud, and leaving nothing behind. Some gradual improvement took place in the health of the count; and one day, after what seemed an effort to command himself, he asked whether any one had lately called at the château. Annette replied that there had been no one.

“Not the family of Cajare?” he said.

“Not for ten days,” replied Annette calmly.

“Not the baron?” asked the count, more eagerly.

“Oh no!” replied Annette, with a bright

and happy smile. "Thank Heaven, he has been gone to his regiment this fortnight."

"What mean you, my dear child?" said the count, almost rising from the sofa. "You seem happy that he is gone."

"I *am* well pleased," she said, "though not exactly happy; for it matters little to me whether he went or stayed, in truth; but still it is pleasanter he should be away."

"What has he done to offend you, Annette?" demanded the count, gazing inquiringly on her face. "He must have done something to make you angry, by the way you speak."

"Oh no, my dear father!" replied Annette — for by that endearing name she always called him — "he did nothing to make me angry; but he spoke, the last time I saw him, of the joy I would have, some day, in quitting this dull old château, and leaving the tiresome society to which I have been so long confined, for all the pomp, and wit, and brightness of the capital."

The count gazed upon her face for two or three minutes without making any reply; but

there was a well-pleased smile upon his countenance which spoke satisfaction and relief.

“ He knew you not, my Annette,” he replied at length, “ he knew you not ;” and without other comment he sunk back upon the cushions of the sofa. But his health improved more rapidly from that day forward.

CHAP. XIV.

FROM time to time the Count de Castelneau had urged Annette not to deprive herself altogether of air and exercise on his account; but to go out either on horseback or on foot. She had always avoided doing so, however; and remained steadfast to her post as long as the least danger existed in the case of her friend and protector. Nor would she quit him till he was again permitted to read and to amuse himself; but when the physicians took off the prohibition from his books, the count insisted that she should take exercise for one or two hours during each day. Nor did he do so without cause; for during the long course of his illness the colour had somewhat faded from Annette's cheek, and the brightness of her eye had been dimmed by anxiety and watching. To see him better, in itself, did her good; and one or two walks or

rides through the forest soon brought back the rose to its sweet resting place. The count was delighted to see her look so much better, and now insisted that she should leave him more frequently than she had hitherto done, promising soon to join her in her rambles. On the fourth day after she had again begun to go out, Mademoiselle de St. Morin proceeded on her walk alone in the cool of the evening. It had been a bright sunshiny day, somewhat fatiguing from the great heat, and the world around seemed full of repose and calm tranquillity. The birds of spring were yet in song, and the rich notes of the blackbird were heard all through the woods, although the nightingale was now silent. The sun, softened down, like a buoyant heart that has just known enough of sorrow to be calm in its cheerfulness, peeped through the bolls of the tall trees, and poured its light underneath the green branches, gilding every inequality of the mossy carpet of the forest with warm streams of yellow light; but the fresh and balmy air of evening was abroad, and a thousand sweet scents were shaken from

the wings of the wind. It was an evening to rejoice in, with the high, pure, holy rejoicing which raises the heart from God's works to God himself, and glorifies his name as he has told us it may best be glorified. In the calm, and the stillness, and the freshness, and the brightness of that hour, in its perfume and its melody, there was a call to joy and adoration which the heart of Annette de St. Morin was not formed to resist. She walked on thinking of the beauty of the Almighty works, and of the goodness and greatness of Him who made them; all her sensations were joyful, and all her thoughts were praise.

Thus proceeded she till she came to the same spot where she had sat not very many weeks before, when she had been accosted by the party of travellers, whose strange demeanour seemed to have begun a new epoch in her existence. There were the little cross and fountain, there the bright stream winding on its way, there the bank where she had been seated; and the whole was now filled sweetly with the soft light of the declining sun, the rays of

which glittered on the bosom of the water, and seemed to dive for the pebbles at the bottom. The dark wood rose up behind, shrouding, as it were, that sweet spot in its sombre mantle. Annette placed herself where she had been seated before the arrival of the strangers; and the scene, of course, brought its recollections with it. Many a curious question and speculation came also in the train of memory; and she sat musing for about twenty minutes, and asking herself who could be the persons whom she had there seen? — what could be the real cause of the agitation which one of the party had displayed?

She was deep in this meditation, when she suddenly heard a sound close to her; and, turning suddenly round, she beheld, to her surprise and consternation, a gaunt she-wolf, followed by two young cubs. It was not the period of the year when those animals generally roam; but sometimes, from heat and want of water, they become very furious even in the midst of summer, especially in Auvergne and some of the midland districts of France. They

usually fly, indeed, from any human being if not hard pressed, and if not fled from ; but any sudden motion seems to excite their ferocity, and make them turn either to attack others or to defend themselves. Annette knew that such is the case ; and had more than once seen a wolf in the forest without meeting any injury or suffering any alarm. At the moment, however, her nerves were somewhat unstrung by long attendance on her sick friend. The beast, too, was close to her, running fast, as if pursued by some one ; and, giving way to terror, she started up with a quick scream.

The animal instantly sprang at her throat ; but luckily caught the collar of the mantle which she wore in its teeth, and tore it off, only slightly grazing the skin. The violence of the attack, however, made the poor girl reel back against the tree and nearly fall. The wolf was in the very act of springing at her again, and the heart of poor Annette was faint with terror, when there came suddenly the sound of a shot, and the ferocious beast rolled over on its side.

It was not killed; and, though severely wounded, was struggling on its feet again with a fierce howl, when a gentleman on horseback galloped quickly up, sprang to the ground, and, setting his foot upon the body of the animal, held it firmly down. Mad with pain, it bit the heel of his boot so hard that he could scarcely shake it off; but, drawing his horse towards him by the rein which was over his arm, while he still held down the wolf with his foot, he took a pistol from the left-hand holster and discharged it into the furious animal's head. The wolf moved no more; but it was still with difficulty that he withdrew his heel from its jaws, as he turned to aid Mademoiselle de St. Morin, who had now sunk upon the ground, and was supporting herself against the boll of the tree.

Poor Annette, as may well be supposed, was well nigh fainting; and the effect of terror being very often, as we all know, more severe after the danger has passed away than before, for several minutes she could not speak, even to give one word of thanks, or reply to the many

questions which were asked her by the gentleman who had come to her aid.

He treated her with all kindness, and care, and tenderness; brought water in his hand from the little fountain to sprinkle upon her temples and forehead; and although he gazed upon her with interest, and perhaps with admiration, yet his look was respectful, and such as Annette could have met at any time without casting down her eyes. He assured her again and again that there was no danger; and taking her hand, which still trembled very much, in order to call her attention, he pointed to the wolf lying dead, saying, "It can hurt nobody now, if it has not hurt you already. — Good Heaven!" he continued, seeing a drop or two of blood upon the part of her dress which covered her bosom. "I fear it *has* hurt you! Let me carry you home for assistance! — Surely you are Mademoiselle de St. Morin! — Let me carry you home!"

He was about to raise her in his arms; but Annette prevented him by laying her hand upon his, and saying in a low tone, "No, no,

I am not hurt — only faint with fear — It is very foolish — I shall be better in a moment.”

The gentleman, who had kneeled beside her for the purpose of lifting her from the ground, continued in the same posture, gazing upon her with much interest, and endeavouring, to the best of his power, to reassure her, but still expressing a fear that she was in some degree injured. “No,” she said, speaking more freely after the pause of a moment or two, — “no, I can assure you, it is nothing. The wolf only tore my mantle at the first spring; but the second would have killed me if it had not been for your arrival. How can I ever thank you?”

“Oh, think not of it, dear lady!” the stranger replied; “it was but a very small service, and one which I would have performed, of course, for the lowest peasant girl in the neighbourhood. How much more gladly then for you!”

Annette smiled faintly, and looked up to the face of her deliverer, for the first time, supposing, from his words, that, though the voice was unknown to her, he must be some one with

whom she was already acquainted ; but the face was equally strange, though it was by no means a countenance to be forgotten when once beheld.

“ I am ashamed,” said Annette, raising herself slowly, — “ I am ashamed to acknowledge that I do not recollect the person of a gentleman who has rendered me so great a service, though, from what you say, I suppose, of course, I have had the pleasure of meeting you before.”

“ No, dear lady,” her companion replied ; “ although I am a native of this part of France, circumstances have prevented me from ever forming your acquaintance ; but I have heard much and often of Mademoiselle de St. Morin, from those who know and esteem her, and I can but say, that if I could have chosen the person in all France to whom I would most willingly have rendered such a service as this, I should have named yourself.”

Such courteous speeches were then so common in France that the stranger’s words sounded in Annette’s ears as a mere casual compliment. “ You are too kind,” she replied ; “ but I can

assure you that my guardian, the Count de Castelneau, who lives not far hence, will be most happy to thank you gratefully for the great service you have rendered me, and will do it much better than I can do it, though I feel the gratitude I owe you as deeply as any one can."

"I fear, madam," replied the stranger, "that it will be impossible for me to visit the Count de Castelneau at the present time; but when you are well enough, I will accompany you so far back towards the château as to insure that no farther evil shall befall you."

"If it be not wrong of me to ask it then," said Annette, "may I inquire to whom I am thus indebted for my life?"

The stranger looked down upon the ground in silence for a moment or two, and then gazing up in her face with a peculiar smile, he replied, "In answer to your question, dear lady, I might give you a false name were I so disposed; but I do not think falsehood is ever justified by any circumstances, and I would rather risk offending you, and seeming rude, by giving you no

reply than an untrue one. Yet, if I judge of you rightly, you will forgive me when I tell you, it is necessary to my safety that my being in this part of the country should not be known."

"I would forgive you, by all means," replied Annette; "but there is nothing to forgive, though of course I should have been glad, had you thought right, to know the name of him who has delivered me from a great danger—but be it exactly as you please."

The stranger again cast down his eyes for a moment, and then answered in a somewhat sorrowful tone, "I fear, notwithstanding, that you are a little offended."

"No, indeed," replied Annette, "very far from it. I could of course only wish to know your name, sir, in order to place it, as it were, in the register of memory, coupled with the greatest service, perhaps, that has ever yet been rendered to me by any one."

"Then you shall have it, lady," replied the stranger, "but not now. I will find means to

see you before I quit this part of the country, and you will forgive me my silence now when you hear all my reasons for it."

"Indeed," answered Annette, smiling again, "I will not let you diminish my feeling of obligation to you, sir, by persuading me that I have any thing to forgive. Whether we do meet again or not, I shall ever recollect the assistance you have this day rendered me with the deepest gratitude, and think of you as one who has saved my life."

"Though you estimate the service more highly than it deserves," replied the stranger, "it is so pleasant to me that you should thus over-estimate it that I will not try to make you think otherwise. One thing, perhaps, you have indeed to thank me for, — which is the fact of having conquered a momentary weak fear of hurting you in the attempt to save you. As I was riding through the by-paths of the wood before I saw you, the wolf and its cubs ran on for some way before me. At the turn — up there by those holly bushes — I lost sight of the animal for an instant; but the next moment, hearing

your scream, and galloping on, I beheld it flying at your throat. As soon as I heard your cry I had taken a pistol from the holster; but for a moment I hesitated to fire, for fear of missing the ferocious beast and hitting you. I soon saw, however, that there was no time to be lost: I rarely miss my mark, and did not in this instance, as you know; though had I been less apprehensive I might have killed the wolf at the first shot, and then it would not have bit my heel in the way that it has done."

Annette started with a look of fear and anxiety, and saw that the moss round the spot where the stranger's foot rested was stained for some way with blood.

"Oh! come to the château," she said eagerly. "Come to the château and have the wound attended to. I fear, indeed I fear that you are a good deal hurt."

Her countenance expressed her apprehensions even more than her words; but the stranger only laughed, assured her that the bite was a mere nothing and would be well in a few days.

“ I will accompany you,” he said, “ till we come within sight of the château, dear lady. I see you are now well enough to walk home ; and I can only say that I am most sincerely grateful to some indescribable expectation of I knew not what, which led me through this part of the forest to-day. To tell the truth,” he added, after a brief pause, accompanying his words with a gay frank smile, “ there might be some expectation — some hope, perhaps, of seeing Mademoiselle de St. Morin, though certainly there was neither expectation nor hope of even conversing with her, far less of rendering her any aid.”

There was something in the tone and the manner — in a slight touch of embarrassment which mingled with the frankness, in a degree of wavering in the voice and sparkling in the eye, that showed the words to be not a mere thing of course. The colour rose slightly in Annette’s cheek at the compliment which the stranger’s speech implied ; though there is many a woman who would have sought to make that compliment greater and more direct, by pretend-

ing not to understand it, Annette was not one of those. She shrunk from it as some plants do from even the most delicate touch ; and she only replied, “ I think it would be much better for you to accompany me to the château, and have the wound dressed. You may perfectly trust to my kind guardian Monsieur de Castelneau ; for he would betray no man, and far less one who has saved my life.”

The stranger, however, still resisted her entreaty ; but walked on by Annette’s side, leading his horse by the bridle, and giving her assistance at every little rough spot of the forest road, though he did not absolutely offer her his arm to support her still agitated and wavering steps.

Annette did not construe such forbearance into any neglect of what was due to her as a lady, or into any want of kind consideration for her yet scarcely allayed terror. The stranger’s manner was all courteous, and his words and tone so kind, so tender — if we may use that word in its proper senses of gentle and compassionate — that Mademoiselle de St. Morin felt

there was nothing wanting in his demeanour to make her at ease by his side. There was, indeed, an expression of interest and admiration in his eyes when he looked upon her, which might have agitated her had his whole manner not been even on the colder side of respect. She would have taken his arm without the slightest hesitation had he offered it, but she did not think worse of him for refraining.

Thus they walked on somewhat slowly towards the château, sometimes speaking, but sometimes silent for several minutes. At length the stranger said rather abruptly, after an interval of thought, "Might it not be better, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, not to mention at all to Monsieur de Castelneau what has occurred to-day?"

Annette started, and looked full in her companion's face; for she had imagined — why and wherefore it would be difficult to tell — perhaps from his countenance, which was noble and open — perhaps from his having rendered

her an important service, and thus won gratitude on his side — but she had imagined and convinced herself that he was all that is frank and sincere. “Oh no!” she replied eagerly, after that inquiring look; “I always tell him every thing that occurs. I should be unworthy of the kindness he has ever shown me, if I could conceal any thing from him.”

“You mistake me, I think,” said the stranger with a smile. “I only meant, till the count is better. I have heard that he is very ill; and one of the physicians who is attending him, and who also sees frequently a sick relation of my own, informed me that any thing which agitates Monsieur de Castelneau is likely to cause a relapse in his present state. You know best, however. I only feared that to hear of the great danger of one whom he loves — whom he must love — so dearly, might perhaps retard his recovery. But no one can judge better than you.”

The cloud cleared away from Annette’s face in a moment; she felt that she had done her

companion wrong in her own thoughts, and with the noble candour of her nature she hastened to acknowledge it."

"I beg your pardon," she said, "I did mistake you, and I am sorry for so doing; for I am sure you think as I do, that to a person who has always loved, and been kind, and generous, and good to us, as Monsieur de Castelneau has been to me, perfect sincerity and truth are always the best — are in fact a duty."

"Indeed I do, Mademoiselle de St. Morin," replied the stranger warmly. "There may be many people who admire you alone for your beauty, but it is for such feelings as those which you have just expressed that I can most admire you. It is for actions founded on such feelings that I have learnt to esteem you from my early youth."

Mademoiselle de St. Morin coloured at the stranger's words, although they were very pleasant to her ear; not so much because they were in praise of herself, as because they showed that her first impression of her companion's character was not incorrect. He

marked the blood rising in her cheek, however, and hastened instantly to give another turn to what he was saying.

“I think,” he continued, “that we may very easily lay down a rule for ourselves in setting out in life, by which we may satisfy our own heart, and yet guard against the dangers of over-confidence. In dealing with others our maxim should be, perfect candour to all those who love us, who are frank with us, and whom we can esteem; reserve towards those whom we have no reason to trust, or any reason to distrust: but truth to all.”

“Oh, I agree with you heartily,” cried Annette, gazing up in the fine countenance of him who spoke those words, with one of those winning looks of pleasure that from such eyes as hers are hard to be resisted; and from that moment there were many of the cold and iron barriers which society raises up between strangers cast down for her and her companion.

They walked slowly on then, speaking together as if they had been old friends. Both felt happy in the communication thus esta-

blished between them: both felt pleased and interested in discovering new things in each other's hearts, which harmonised well with the thoughts and feelings of their own. They walked slowly, I have said; but yet the time seemed very short ere, through the opening of the wood, they saw some of the detached towers of the château; and the stranger paused to take leave of Mademoiselle de St. Morin.

“ I believe,” he said, “ that I must here bid you adieu. I need hardly add that I regret it much, for I have certainly passed an hour of very great happiness by your side.”

Annette cast her eyes down; she felt that she could have said the same, and on any former occasion the natural straight-forward candour of her heart would have made her do so at once. But now for some reason, or rather I should say from some feeling which she could not account for, her lips would not utter such a confession, and she remained silent while her companion went on.

“ And now, perhaps,” he continued, “ I am leaving you never to see you again. However,

I trust that you will believe me, when I say that I shall ever recollect you, and the short, the too short time I have spent with you, as amongst the very brightest memories of a life which has had but too few of such sweet things to remember. It is very hard," he added, with a sigh, "that if in the midst of the great solitude of existence we do find some beings with whom we could joyfully spend many a long day, we are almost always sure to have but a short glimpse of them, and never to see them again. I am sure, Mademoiselle de St. Morin," he went on, seeing the colour flutter in her cheek; "I am sure that you do not misunderstand me, nor think for one moment that I mean any thing but what is equally respectful and true towards you, or any thing indeed that even this very short acquaintance does not fully justify me in saying."

"Oh, no, no," replied the young lady, eagerly; "it was not that! I only wish to tell you, and did not very well know how to say it, that I am very, very grateful for your kindness to me, — equally grateful to you, indeed, for

saving my life, and for your kind and considerate conduct since; and I do hope and trust," she continued, growing bolder as she spoke, "that, so far from never meeting again, we may meet soon, and meet often. I may add, that it will be your fault if we do not; for I can venture to assure you that the gates of the château of Castelneau will ever be open to you, and that I myself and my more than father will be very, very glad, to show you how grateful we are for what you have done in my defence."

The stranger looked much gratified; but he replied, "Do not, dear lady, do not tempt me too much; and, should I be prevented from taking advantage of so kind an invitation, do not, pray do not say that it is my fault; but believe on the contrary that it is my misfortune: and now, though every minute may be sweet, I will not detain you longer, but pray Heaven to bless and keep you in its especial care."

Thus saying, he took her hand respectfully and pressed his lips upon it; and she, wishing him good-bye, proceeded on her way towards the château, bearing with her feelings which

she had never experienced before, but not such as to prevent her from acknowledging boldly to her own heart that she should be very sorry indeed if this first meeting with the stranger should be the last.

From this fact it will clearly be perceived by the learned reader — learned in that most difficult, obscure, and abstruse book, the human heart — that Annette was not in the least degree in love with her companion of the last half hour ; for, had she been so, she would never have acknowledged any thing to her own heart at all, but would have courted, on the contrary, that sort of mental blindness to all that was passing in her own bosom, of which the bandage over Cupid's eyes is but a just emblem. However that may be, in the short space between the wood and the château, she asked herself several times whether it would, or would not, be better to tell the count, in his present state of health, what had occurred to her. It were scarcely fair to ask whether — hidden from her own eyes, in the deep recesses of the heart — any shy spirit put off upon her,

like a coiner passing false money for real, one sort of motives for another. Suffice it that her heart was too upright by nature to suffer one wish for concealment to affect her conduct; and before she had reached the gates of the château, she had made up her mind to tell the count the whole, but to do so carefully and cautiously for fear of alarming him.

CHAP. XV.

ANNETTE entered the saloon, where the Count de Castelneau was stretched upon the sofa reading, with the mantle which the wolf had torn from her neck cast over her arm. The count laid down the book, and raised himself to speak with her; but the moment that he did so the penetrating eyes of strong affection discovered at once that something had gone wrong. "Come hither, my Annette," he cried. "What is the matter? You are not well — your cheek is very pale, my dear child — your mantle torn, and blood upon your bosom."

"Oh, it is nothing," replied Annette smiling, and seeing all her plans of communicating her intelligence with caution overthrown in a moment. "It is nothing, I can assure you, my dear father. A little accident which I met with in the wood! It might have been more serious; but, as it is, no harm has happened."

“ But speak, Annette, speak !” said the count. “ What is it ? It must have been something serious indeed to leave your cheek so pale.”

“ Oh no, indeed,” she answered. “ I was frightened, but not hurt. The truth is, I met a wolf in the wood——”

“ And he flew at you !” cried the count eagerly. “ He attacked you ! Is it not so, Annette ? How did you escape, my girl ?”

“ Nay, do not be alarmed,” said Annette : “ you see I am quite safe. It was an old wolf followed by two young ones, and she did, as you think, fly at my throat : she caught my mantle in her teeth and tore it off, scratching me — not with her teeth, I think — but with the clasps of the mantle. She was springing at me again, however, when a gentleman rode up and shot her with a pistol which he took from his holsters. The animal was not quite dead, and bit his heel very severely ; but I did not see much of what happened then, for I was nearly fainting.”

“ The Baron de Cajare ?” said the count. “ Was it the Baron de Cajare ?”

“ Oh, no !” exclaimed Annette : “ quite a different person.”

“ Who then, who then ?” asked Monsieur de Castelneau quickly.

“ Nay, that I cannot tell,” replied his adopted child ; “ for, although he was as courteous as he could be in all other things, he would not give his name ; and he told me very plainly, when he had escorted me nearly to the château, that it was probable I should never see him again.”

“ Indeed !” said the count. “ Some stranger travelling through the country perhaps.”

“ No, certainly he was not that,” answered Annette. “ He knew who I was, though I did not know him. He had heard too that you were ill, and seemed well acquainted with all about you ; but yet I could not get him to come on to the château, though the wolf had bit him in the heel severely, I should imagine from the blood I saw. He told me, however, that he had particular reasons for not making himself known.”

The count turned somewhat pale, and enquired, “ What age was he ?”

“ That I can hardly tell,” replied Annette, “ but——”

“ Was he old or young?” demanded the count, interrupting her.

“ Oh, young !” exclaimed Annette, “ young, certainly ! Perhaps five or six and twenty, but not more.”

The count seemed relieved, and answered, “ It is a pity your gallant deliverer would not come in, my Annette : you might have told him that he could trust me in safety.”

“ I did so,” answered Annette, “ but I could not prevail. He was very obdurate indeed, I can assure you.”

“ He must be obdurate indeed, my dear child, with whom *you* could not prevail,” said the count ; “ but go, my Annette, wash away the blood from your neck, and then come back. You shall instantly write a note for me to the Baron de Nogent. He is the *louvétier** of the

* Many noblemen were formerly invested with this office of *louvétier*, or titular hunter of the wolves in their district ; nor is it yet altogether abolished, although the wolves in France have greatly decreased in numbers since that time.

canton ; and, though it be not the proper season for hunting them, we must not suffer them to roam about in this way, at any time of the year."

The note was accordingly written in the course of that evening, and was sent over to Castel Nogent by a man on horseback, who returned in about two hours. He brought no note in answer to that of the count, but merely a message. The Baron de Nogent, he said, was ill in bed ; but he had told one of his servants to reply, that, having heard that one or two wolves had been seen in the neighbourhood, he had already ordered the dogs and men, which he was obliged to maintain for that purpose, to clear the country of the savage beasts, and the hunters were even then in the woods putting these commands into execution.

" Ill is he ?" demanded the count.

" Yes, my lord," answered the servant ; " he has been very ill, his people said, for more than three weeks."

" I grieve that I cannot go over to see him," said Monsieur de Castelneau, turning to An-

nette; "he is one of the few men whom I can respect and esteem. Could you not ride over to-morrow, my Annette, and visit him for me? He is so solitary at all times, that I cannot but think in sickness it would be a comfort to him to see you."

"Oh, I will go willingly," replied Annette. "You know how I love and reverence him. I wish from my heart he would let us do any thing to make his solitary hours more cheerful than they are."

Before the sun had risen into the meridian on the following morning, Annette mounted a jennet, which had been bought and trained for her own riding; and followed, as was then customary, by two or three servants, she took the road towards Fons, and in little more than an hour had reached Castel Nogent. After some delay, the baron admitted her to his sick chamber, and thanked her for her visit with kindness and sincerity. She found him very much worn; but he assured her that he was much better than he had been, and would soon be well. For more than hour Annette sat by

him striving to cheer and amuse him; and so successful did she find herself, that she promised to return in a day or two if her guardian continued to improve in health. The baron caught eagerly at her offer, and reminded her of it when she went away; and Annette, repeating that she would not forget, left him with a heart satisfied and gay at having done an act of kindness, and seeing that it was not only appreciated but successful to the fullest extent she could desire.

She was riding quickly through the woods, with the beauty of the scene, the fineness of the day, and the exhilarating motion of her horse all adding to the glad sensations of her own heart, when suddenly, at one of the cross roads of the forest, she was met by a gentleman on horseback, who for an instant drew in his rein as if with surprise and hesitation; but the moment after rode up to her with a low inclination of the head, and turned his horse upon the same path which she was pursuing.

The reader has already divined what Annette discovered at first sight—that the stranger who

now joined her was the person who had saved her from the wolf. He was differently dressed, however; and was now clothed in a rich hunting suit, which became him well. It was impossible not to own that in person and in features he was a very handsome man; but that was little in Annette's estimation, when compared with the high and noble expression of his countenance, which would certainly prove Nature to be a sad deceiver, she thought, if his heart were not generous and kind.

Mademoiselle de St. Morin received him with a glad and open smile, held out her hand frankly towards him, and said at once, "Oh! I am so glad to see you again."

The stranger pressed the hand which she gave in his own; and his sparkling eyes replied in language not to be mistaken, that, if she was glad to see him, he was no less so to see her. There was, however, in the young lady's look a gay and playful expression, — a meaning, perhaps it might be called, — which surprised her companion; and while the grooms dropped farther behind, and she rode on with him side

by side, she led the conversation cheerfully and brightly, as if she had known him for many years.

“ I am happy,” he said at length, “ most happy to see you so well, and that your fright has not hurt your health or spirits.”

“ You think my spirits high, perhaps,” answered Annette, “ because I am more gay and familiar with you than I was when last we met. There is a reason for it, however. Do you know what that reason is ?”

“ No indeed,” he replied, “ I cannot even divine it.—Nay more, I have learnt from many an old fiction and tale of my childhood, that when any thing which makes us very happy is dark and mysterious we should never pry into the secret, lest we dispel the charm.”

“ But I will tell you the secret,” replied Annette; “ for the magic is all very simple, I can assure you. The secret then is, that I now know who you are; and believe me that discovery makes a very great difference; for although I must ever have been grateful, had you been who you might, there are some whom

it is a pleasure to be grateful to — some a pain.”

“Are you sure you are right, dear lady?” said the stranger.

“I am sure,” she replied, “quite sure, though no one has betrayed you.”

“How then is it possible you can know?” he demanded; “for I am certain that you never saw me until two days ago.”

“Nay, I discovered it very easily,” she answered; “by studying the face of a father after I had seen that of a son. Not that the features are alike, but the expression.— You will understand better what I mean, when I tell you that I have just been to Castel Nogent, and sat with the baron for near an hour.”

“Then all I have to say, dear lady,” replied the other, “is, that I must now, not only beg you to be cautious, but most particularly request that you will confine the discovery you have made to your own breast alone. I think I may ask this of you, without asking any thing wrong; and I believe you will grant it, when you know that I am now both absent from my

regiment without leave, and contrary to the express commands of the officer next in rank above myself; I mean the Baron de Cajare. I received news that my father was at the point of death; and as my presence was not wanted with the regiment, I merely announced to Monsieur de Cajare that it was my intention to visit this part of the country, stating my motives at full. He was himself wasting his time in Paris at the distance of two days' journey from the corps, but he thought fit to send a messenger, prohibiting my coming into this part of France. I instantly lodged my appeal with his superior and mine; but had I waited for a reply, my father might have been dead before I came. I therefore had to choose my course, and at once decided on coming hither immediately. My companions are all my friends, and they give me good intelligence; but I must return to-morrow or the day after, lest this gentleman rejoin the regiment and find that I am absent."

"Oh! for pity's sake rejoin it at once," exclaimed Annette. "I tremble to think what might be the consequences, if your absence were

discovered. I cannot help supposing that Monsieur de Cajare is a somewhat heartless person, who would show but little compassion or consideration of any kind."

"In this instance," replied her companion, "he has certainly shown very little consideration; and I know not why he has acquired for himself in the service the reputation of a very artful, and a very remorseless man. I must own myself, however," he added frankly, "that I have never personally seen him say or do any thing that should give rise to such an opinion. His demeanour, as far as I have seen it, has always been that of a finished gentleman and a man of refined taste."

Mademoiselle de St. Morin looked down thoughtfully, but for some time made no reply. At length, however, she answered, "I know too little of him to judge; but I should rather think that, in the ordinary course of life, people display what they will be on great occasions by small traits, and you may depend upon it that it is by these his fellow-officers have judged him."

“It may be so,” replied her companion ;
“and indeed the only story that I ever heard of his doing any thing to win himself such a reputation referred to his having won a large sum from a young man at play. The loser had indeed lost all, and more than all, for he was forced to tell Cajare that he had not wherewithal to pay him ; upon which the baron coolly took his sword and broke it across his knee, saying, what was perhaps true, but very cruel, that he who played for sums he could not pay was unworthy to wear the weapon of a man of honour. The unhappy man threw open the window which was just above the course of the Rhone, and cast himself headlong out. Cajare sat still at the table, and called for more cards. So goes the story in the regiment ; but I was not with it at the time, being then a lieutenant in the regiment of Picardy.”

Annette gave a shudder as she listened, but made no reply, and her companion soon turned the conversation to other things. During the course of their ride she found the same highly finished taste, the same knowledge of men, of

countries, and of arts, which had given a charm to the conversation of the Baron de Cajare; but there was something superadded now, something that, like the sunshine to a beautiful landscape, afforded the crowning grace to all the rest, brightened every thing it shone upon, and called forth the beauties of the whole. It was, that the heart spoke as well as the head; it was, that there was feeling, as well as thought, in every thing. Frankness and openness too, candour and bright sincerity, were in every word that he spoke; and, though it was evident that he considered far less what was likely to please than Monsieur de Cajare, he did please without the effort, and won without the calculation. It was a very bright hour for Annette while she rode onward with him towards the château. At length, however, he drew in his rein, saying, with a deep sigh, “And now that I must leave you, forgive me if I repeat in thus parting from you, certainly for a long time, and perhaps for ever, that I shall recollect you long and well — far too long ever to enjoy again the society with which I am going to mingle. I shall see

nothing like you there; and yet I cannot find in my heart to regret that I have thus met you, even though I be destined thus to leave you—I mean no compliment, no exaggeration, but simple truth.

Annette blushed deeply; but yet she found courage to raise her eyes to his, saying in a tone gently reproachful, “Oh! Monsieur Nogent, how can I answer you? All I will say then is, pray go back to your regiment, and believe me that I will see your father constantly, and show him every care and tendance in my power, as much out of gratitude to you as out of affectionate regard for him.”

She held out her hand to him once more; he pressed his lips upon it, and then turning his horse rode away.

Annette proceeded slowly to the château; but as she guided her horse through the gates, she looked back towards the hills and woodlands stretching in the direction of Fons. There was one spot where the shoulder of the nearest acclivity protruded bare through the wood, and commanded a view of the château and the

ground round about it. On the summit of the hill, at the distance of about three quarters of a mile, Annette de St. Morin saw a single horseman. He was perfectly motionless, and was evidently gazing upon the path she had taken. It was not of course by features or by dress that Annette could distinguish at that distance who it was, but there was something within told her at once the name of him who was there watching for the last look.

CHAP. XVI.

As Annette passed through the old hall, and was taking her way up the stairs which led to the saloon, she paused from time to time to reflect. Her thoughts were in confusion; the usual calm tranquillity did not reign in her bosom; her heart beat; and her mind would not fix upon any certain point. She was alarmed at her own sensations, and asked herself the cause of them.

One of the causes — for in this instance, as in all others, there were many causes combining to produce one effect — she soon discovered; but it was not the chief cause. She had tacitly promised not to reveal the fact, which she had discovered accidentally, of the presence of the young Baron de Nogent in that part of the country; and she fancied that it was the necessity of concealing any thing from one to whom

she had hitherto been all candour, that thus agitated and bewildered her. She felt, however, that she had no right to sport with the fate of another; and though she was sure that the secret, with the Count de Castelneau, would be as safe as with herself, yet, as he whom that secret chiefly affected had besought her to tell no one, she resolved to obey the injunction to the letter.

There was no difficulty in so doing, for her guardian had retired to take some repose during the heat of noon; which had lately become customary with him, and from which habit he had derived great benefit. When he returned to the saloon, he confined his questions entirely to the state of the good old nobleman whom Annette had visited, approved highly of her promise to see him again, and expressed a wish that she would go to Castel Nogent on the ensuing day.

Annette hesitated, however, and then replied that she would rather postpone her visit till the morning after. The count said let it be so; but he gave her an enquiring glance,

asking himself why she, who was ever ready to fly to aid and comfort those who needed either assistance or consolation, should delay in the present instance the execution of her task of kindness. Annette saw him look at her gravely, and the colour rose into her cheek, for the motive of her conduct was not easily to be explained even to herself.

The fact is, she wished Ernest de Nogent to be gone back to his regiment before she renewed her visit to his father, and she feared that such might not be the case if she went to Castel Nogent the next day. Was his society disagreeable to her, then? Oh no! but the agitation which she felt — ay and his evident admiration — and, even more than all, the new strange pleasure which his conversation had afforded, frightened her young and inexperienced heart, and made her wish for thought, long intense thought, ere she beheld him again. Timidity even flies from that which it loves; and it is no proof at all that the society of the young Baron de Nogent was not more pleasing to Mademoiselle de St. Morin than

any other which she had yet met with in life, that she was unwilling to return to Castel Nogent till she was perfectly sure that he had left it. She coloured a little then, more from the inexplicability of her own feelings than aught else; but the count took no notice except in his own heart, and Annette's journey was accordingly put off for a day.

In the meantime, what were the comments with her own spirit? — what were the questions that she asked her own heart? — what were the replies that her own heart made?

Alack, and a well-a-day, reader, that we should confess it! But Annette was a woman; and with all a woman's feelings she retired to her chamber that night, thinking that she had the most anxious purpose of enquiring into her own sensations—of asking herself, in short, a thousand questions which nobody but herself could answer. Yet when she had entered her own chamber, and closed the door, and leaned her head upon her hand and began the enquiry, she stopped at the very threshold of the secret chamber, and would go on no farther.

She persuaded herself that there was nothing to enquire into, that she had been frightened about nothing, that it was all extremely natural and very right for her to like the conversation and be pleased with the society of a graceful and accomplished man who had saved her life ; and though, perhaps, there were doubts at the very bottom of her heart of all this reasoning being correct, yet she suffered it to prevent her from enquiring farther, and let it convince her will, if it did not convince her judgment. Have we not often seen a child stand on a summer day at the margin of the sunny sea, longing to bathe its limbs in the refreshing wave ? Have we not seen it cast off its garments and dip in the timid foot, — draw back, hurry on its clothing again, and run away, as if in fear of those bright but untried waters ? Thus was it with Mademoiselle de St. Morin, — the ocean of love was before her, and she trembled to adventure in.

Yet when, on the day appointed, she once more mounted her jennet to ride over to Castel Nogent, a soft sort of melancholy hung upon

her — perhaps a feeling of regret to think that Ernest de Nogent was not there — that she should not see him again, to use his own words, “certainly for a long time, perhaps for ever.” She rode more slowly and thoughtfully than she had formerly done — she gazed round at the spot where she had parted from him — she stopped her horse at the little fountain and let him drink in the stream, and then, with a sigh, she shook the rein and went on upon her way.

When she arrived at Castel Nogent, she paused at the usual entrance, which, let it be remarked, was a side-door, and not the great gates; and on ringing the bell, was immediately admitted by an old and faithful servant of the family.

“Oh, madam!” he said, “the baron is very much better; I think your visit did him a great deal of good. If you will come into the library for a moment, he will be down stairs.”

Annette followed to the library, which she found untenanted, except by the sunshine, that poured in at the window through the branches of a thin tree opposite, and, dancing

upon the floor as the wind waved the boughs, gave an air of cheerful life to the apartment. It was a fine old room, well stored with curious volumes, and with old lances and other weapons of a remote period, forming trophies between the book-cases; while here and there a casque, a corslet, or suit of complete armour belonging to some of the ancestors of the baron long dead, was seen on any vacant space upon the walls. The armour, it is true, was somewhat rusty, the books covered with the dust of time; manifold motes danced in the beams of light; and every thing showed that the servants in Castel Nogent were too few in number to keep the house in that exact order which leaves the hand of Time nearly powerless.

There was an air of dryness, however, and cheerful antiquity about the library, which was pleasant to the eye; and, as it was a place well suited to contemplation, Annette's first act was to fall into a reverie, still standing in the middle of the floor, with one hand resting on the tall back of the chair which the old servant had placed for her, the other holding her riding

whip dropping gracefully by her side, and her whole form and face presenting such an exquisite picture of Beauty in meditation that one might well have wished to be a painter in order to draw her portrait as she there stood.

Her fancies must have been sweet — though they might have a tinge of melancholy in them — for the brow was as open as a bright summer's morning. But the mind must have been very intently occupied with some subject, for she remained during several minutes exactly in one position, without the slightest movement of any kind whatsoever.

On the left-hand side, close by the tall window, and some eight or ten feet from the spot where she had placed herself, was a small door leading into various apartments of the old château ; and at length, if her eyes had not been fixed so steadily upon the floor, she might have seen that door move slowly on its hinges. She did not see it, however, and the first thing that roused her was a shadow coming across the sunshine which found its way through the window.

Annette started and raised her eyes, a little

confused, perhaps, at being found in so deep a fit of meditation; but all the blood rushed up into her face in a moment when she beheld Ernest de Nogent himself standing before her.

“ Ah, Monsieur de Nogent !” she said, “ what has kept you here ? Indeed I am very much afraid it may be dangerous to yourself.”

Ernest advanced and took her hand with a smile half gay, half melancholy.

“ Perhaps it may be dangerous,” he said, shaking his head. “ It may be dangerous to me in more respects than you mean ; but you must not ask me what has kept me here.”

“ Nay,” she answered, gaily, trying to laugh away the agitation which she certainly did feel, but withdrawing her hand from his, “ you are very mysterious ; and I will not attempt to discover mysteries with which I have nothing to do.”

“ With this mystery, I am afraid,” he replied in a low and thoughtful voice, — “ with this mystery, I am afraid, you have not a little to do.”

Annette turned pale. “ Indeed !” she said, with her heart beating violently. “ I should be

very sorry to suppose that were the case, for I do think it very imprudent for you to stay."

"Not so imprudent as you imagine—at least, in the sense that you mean," replied Ernest; "but, in another sense, even more imprudent than you can believe."

Annette was very much agitated, for his manner spoke more perhaps than his words; but do not let it be thought that she was hypocritical, if she tried to avoid a subject which produced so much emotion, and endeavoured to turn the conversation back to the danger which her companion ran in remaining there.

"But you told me," she said, — "you yourself acknowledged to me that there was a very, very great risk in your coming hither at all, and still more in your staying, when every hour may produce a discovery of your absence."

"I have received letters from Paris since we last met," he said; "but the truth is, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, I am, I fear, very foolish, and I have to make two acknowledgments, each of which may appear very strange to you, and each of which may perhaps give you offence.

I could not make up my mind to go without seeing you again. That is my first acknowledgment; the next is, that I am sometimes tempted to wish with my whole heart that I had never beheld you at all."

He had taken Annette's hand while he spoke, and he could not be insensible how it trembled in his own. The varying colour in her cheek, the downcast look of her bright eye, the quick and agitated breathing, might all encourage him to proceed; but, though such signs were not without their happy auguries, Ernest was both unwilling to agitate her too much, and too doubtful of success to press his suit vehemently. Before he had well concluded his sentence, Annette had sunk slowly down into the chair beside her, and placed her left hand over her eyes.

"I agitate you," he continued, suffering her hand to be gently withdrawn from his. "Nay, nay, do not be so much moved. Listen to me, Mademoiselle de St. Morin, listen to me calmly. It is I who have cause to be agitated and apprehensive—but hark!" he continued, paus-

ing abruptly. "Hark ! there is the sound of wheels. What may this mean ? It never happens but thus ; and when we have but one precious moment on which depend our fate and happiness for ever, we are prevented from using it by some impertinent trifle."

Annette looked up ; pushed back the curls from her face, over which they had fallen in the agitation of the moment ; wiped away something like a tear from her eyes, and then held out her hand again to Ernest de Nogent with a smile, which at that moment he would not have exchanged for an empire.

It might be a long task, reader, to explain all the little peculiarities in thought and feeling which made her act so differently from any other woman ; and even when it was done you might not perhaps understand the whole clearly, if you have not comprehended the whole clearly already from the account that has been laid before you of her education and her natural disposition. She could hardly recover herself, however, and remove the traces of agitation from her countenance, ere the door of the

library opened, and the old servant entered with a face somewhat pale, announcing — the Baron de Cajare !

Ernest de Nogent drew himself up to his full height ; and his left hand, by an impulse that he could not resist, fell upon the scabbard of his sword, as if to bring the hilt round towards the right. Annette had just time to give him one imploring look, saying in a low voice, “ For Heaven’s sake, for your father’s sake, for my sake, recollect yourself ! ” when the Baron de Cajare entered the room, and advanced with his usual calm and graceful demeanour towards the spot where Mademoiselle de St. Morin was seated. His lip was curled with the slightest possible sarcastic smile ; but there was no frown upon his brow, and he bowed with the utmost politeness to Annette, saying, “ This is an unexpected pleasure, Mademoiselle ; I trust that you have continued in health and happiness, notwithstanding your close attendance upon Monsieur de Castelneau.”

Annette bowed her head ; and, hoping from his manner that the errand of the Baron de

Cajare was not such as she and Ernest himself believed it to be, she replied in polite terms, and at greater length than she otherwise would have done, stating that she herself was well, and that the Count de Castelneau was daily improving in health.

The baron listened to every word with the most courteous attention, and, ere she had concluded, the old Baron de Nogent himself was in the room. That gentleman instantly fixed his eyes with a frown upon the Baron de Cajare, though he grasped Annette's hand, as if to show her that he did not overlook her and thanked her for her coming.

"To what cause, Monsieur de Cajare," he said, "am I to attribute the honour of this unexpected and unusual visit?"

"I hope you are better, my dear sir," replied the baron; "but I must not take to myself more credit than is my due. My visit is not to yourself, as my very slight acquaintance with you, Monsieur de Nogent, would not justify such intrusion; but it is to this good gentleman

your son, a captain in my regiment of horse, with whom I wish to speak a word or two upon business which we will not discuss in the presence of a lady."

"Mademoiselle de St. Morin will excuse me, sir," said the baron, "if I beg to know at once what is your purpose towards my son."

"I must beg an answer to a similar question too," added Ernest; "as I take it for granted, after our late correspondence, that you did not come here without an object of some importance, and I must choose my own measures accordingly."

"You will of course take no measures but those that are right and proper," replied the baron; "but as you say that Mademoiselle de St. Morin will excuse us all, and as I am in some haste, I will merely beg leave to state that I am under the disagreeable necessity of arresting my young friend here for disobedience of orders, and of sending him to trial for that offence."

"In short, sir," replied the old baron, "you

sought to keep him from his father's sick bed, and now you would seek to break that father's heart?"

"A somewhat hard construction of a simple act of duty," replied Monsieur de Cajare; "nevertheless, my dear sir, it must be accomplished:" and he moved towards the window.

"Is it possible that your nature can be so hard and unfeeling?" said Annette. "Pray, pray, Monsieur de Cajare, have some consideration for the circumstances of the case."

"Alas, my dear young lady," replied the baron, "war is a school that makes us very hard-hearted, I am afraid; but, notwithstanding, I must call up the guard. Do not be frightened at their mustaches, dear lady," he added, with a sarcastic smile; "the Parisian ladies tell me they are very harmless people."

While speaking he had approached the window, and now putting out his head, he called "Come up! come up!"

Something that he saw below seemed to excite his surprise, however; for he still continued

to look out, exclaiming, “Diantre ! what is the meaning of this ? Come up, I say !”

In the meanwhile, the baron and his son and Annette de St. Morin gazed for a moment or two with the silence of deep grief in each other's faces ; but no time was allowed them to speak, for even while Monsieur de Cajare was calling from the window, and ordering the guard a second time with no very measured language to come up, a gentleman dressed in black, and holding a paper in his hand, entered the room with a quiet and noiseless step, and advanced gravely but quickly, without saluting any body.

The baron and his son stared at this new intruder with evident surprise ; but Annette instantly recognised the gentleman whom she had seen with two ladies near the fountain in the wood, and, why she knew not, but his presence seemed a relief to her. He took not the slightest notice of her on the present occasion, however ; and, passing the party in the middle of the room, proceeded to the window from which the Baron de Cajare was reiterating his

order to come up, adding, in a fierce tone and with a somewhat ungentlemanlike interjection, "Why do you not obey?"

So quiet was the step of the stranger who had so suddenly entered the room, that the baron was perfectly unconscious of his presence till he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder, and heard the words, which were then somewhat fearful in France, "*De par le Roi!*"

Monsieur de Cajare instantly turned round, and when he beheld the person who stood beside him, turned deadly pale.

"Monsieur le Baron de Cajare," said the stranger, "in virtue of this *lettre de cachet*, I arrest you in the name of the king, and enjoin you to go with me."

"Where do you intend to take me, Monsieur Morin?" said the baron at once, without the slightest sign of resistance.

"I intend to *send* you to the Bastile, sir," replied Pierre Morin. "I have some other business yet to do in this part of the world, so that I cannot have the honour of accompanying you to Paris. Every thing is prepared for your

comfortable journey; your own carriage is below, or I am much mistaken; but you made a little mistake just now, and took my archers for your own soldiers. May I ask you to walk down, sir, with all convenient speed?"

The Baron de Cajare looked at Annette and then at Ernest de Nogent, and for an instant an expression like that of a fiend came over his countenance. It was gone almost as soon as it appeared, the angry voice in which he called from the window was laid aside likewise, and not the slightest change of tone from that which he used in ordinary conversation was to be distinguished, as he answered Pierre Morin, "Well, Monsieur Morin, of course I obey the king's commands; but I beg leave to say, my young friend here, Monsieur de Nogent, is under my arrest. I must give him into the care of my guard before——"

"You must do nothing *before* obeying the king's commands, sir," replied Pierre Morin: "besides, you need put yourself into no trouble regarding your soldiers, for I took the liberty of discharging them from attendance upon you.

You must recollect, Monsieur le Baron, prisoners have no authority. As to Monsieur de Nogent, sir, I have also the king's orders——”

“To arrest him?” exclaimed the Baron de Cajare.

“I shall notify his majesty's commands affecting him to himself, sir,” replied Pierre Morin in a stern tone, “and not to you. Allow me to say we are wasting time. You have caused me to hurry down here, sir, from the capital, when, if you had attended to the hint sent to you by the Duke de Choiseuil, you would have saved me much trouble, and might perhaps have saved yourself from the Bastile; but vengeance, sir, has no forethought, and his majesty has been made to understand the motives upon which you acted.”

“He might at least have sent a gentleman to arrest me,” said the Baron de Cajare, with a curling lip.

Pierre Morin seemed not in the slightest degree offended, merely replying, “Sir, I obey his majesty's commands, and he expects you to do the same, be they notified to you by whom

they may. But, at the same time, if it be any gratification to you to know that you are treated in the same manner as other persons, let me call to your mind that Pierre Morin, chief officer of the king's lieutenant-general of police, has arrested gentlemen whose ancestors were noble five centuries before your great-grandfather quitted the little bureau in the Rue Quinquampoix."

The colour came warm into the cheek of the Baron de Cajare, as Pierre Morin in the quietest possible tone rebuked his insolent pride. The chief agent of the police of Paris, however, was not to be trifled with any more; and lifting up his finger as he saw Cajare about to reply, he said in a tone of command, "Monsieur le Baron de Cajare, obey the king's commands! Descend the staircase, take your place in the carriage which is waiting for you, and surrender yourself at the royal prison of the Bastile without another word, or I will report your contumacy to his majesty!"

The baron's haughty air instantly sunk; and, without taking notice of any one, without bow or word of adieu, he crossed the room and de-

scended to the hall. Pierre Morin followed ; but before he did so, he turned towards Ernest de Nogent, saying, “ Monsieur de Nogent, you will be good enough to remain here till I come back ;” and then, proceeding with his quick noiseless step down the stairs, he saw the Baron de Cajare into his carriage, and two guards take their seats in the vehicle beside him.

While all these events had been taking place, a number of people had gathered together in the court of the château, some from the neighbouring hamlet, some from the woods where they had been destroying the wolves ; and manifold were the enquiries of “ What is the matter, what is the matter ?”

At length the enquiry was pronounced close to Pierre Morin, who stood on the steps before the great gateway, where the carriage had been drawn up. As soon as he heard it, he turned round to those who spoke, and pronounced the magical words, “ *Enlèvement de police*,” an arrest by the police ; and at the sound the very boldest drew three or four steps back, with

countenances far paler than they had been before.

Ay, the very men who not many years afterwards marched to Paris, and aided to dye the streets of the capital with the blood of many of the best, the bravest, and the noblest in the land, now drew back in terror at the very name of that redoubtable police, whose whole real power, like almost every power on earth, was derived from the fears of those upon whom it was exercised. The carriage rolled rapidly away, after Pierre Morin had handed the paper which he held to one of the soldiers in the inside, and he himself turned his steps again into the mansion of Monsieur de Nogent.

In the meanwhile, those whom he had left behind in the library of the château had continued gazing upon each other with some degree of painful expectation; but Annette recollected the kind, nay the affectionate manner, in which the very man who seemed to possess such power had spoken to her in the forest, and the moment Pierre Morin again appeared, she ad-

vanced towards him, saying, "Let me speak with Monsieur Morin for a moment."

"Oh, sir!" she said, in a low voice, as soon as she was near enough to speak without her words being overheard, "when last I saw you, you expressed yourself kindly and tenderly towards me; let me beseech you to spare Monsieur de Nogent as far as it be possible. Pray remember, sir, he only came hither to see his father, who was then supposed to be dying; and, though that father is better, yet have some consideration for him too."

Pierre Morin heard her in silence, looking in her face with a smile of kindly meaning.

"My dear young lady," he said, at length, "you mistake the whole business; I have no power in this matter—I am a mere instrument. — But do not be frightened; I have nothing to say to Monsieur de Nogent which should pain him, or alarm you."

"Sir," he continued, turning to Ernest, "this young lady has been pleading for you, as if I had some authority of my own in this business; but you very well know I am a mere

agent, as I have just told her. I must therefore inform you, that his majesty commands you to return to your regiment immediately. He has directed me to say, that, as far as he is concerned, he pardons you, in consideration of your father's state of health. The general under whose command you serve will reprimand you for being absent without leave, should he think it necessary. The cause of such an humble individual as myself being commanded to convey this message to you, rather than a military officer, is simply that I was ordered down hither in haste to arrest the Baron de Cajare, whose offence against his majesty has been in some degree mixed up with the question of your absence without leave. You will understand, sir, that the king's order is peremptory that you depart for your regiment instantly. I will now take my leave."

It was in vain the Baron de Nogent and his son pressed Pierre Morin to take some refreshment before he went; he retired at once, taking leave of Annette as he passed, and whispering a single brief sentence in her ear.

The words which Pierre Morin addressed to Annette were merely these, "Do not be surprised or alarmed at any thing you may hear when you return home." But, as always happens, imagination instantly attached the idea of coming evil to the injunction not to fear, and Annette's fancy suggested that some accident or misfortune must have befallen the Count de Castelneau during her absence. She had now learned to feel that there were other persons in the world who might be loved as well as himself, but that did not make her love him differently or less than before; and she hastened to quit her two companions, notwithstanding all the interest which she had learned to take in them, in order to return to him towards whom all the affections of her heart had been given from infancy with high, pure, filial love.

The baron and Ernest de Nogent would fain have detained her, at least for a short time; but she would not stay, saying with a smile that as she had seen all their enemies frustrated, and

even sickness put to flight, her errand was over, and she must hasten back.

Ernest led her down to her horse ; and though there was many a thing in his heart that he would fain have found a moment to utter, yet, perhaps from the impossibility of saying all in so short a space as that which was now afforded him, he remained silent till they reached the bottom of the staircase. There, however, he paused and detained her for an instant, asking with a look of entreaty, “ May I not accompany you on your ride ? ”

“ No, no, indeed ! ” replied Annette. “ Pray remember the commands you have received, and return to your regiment without the delay even of an hour.”

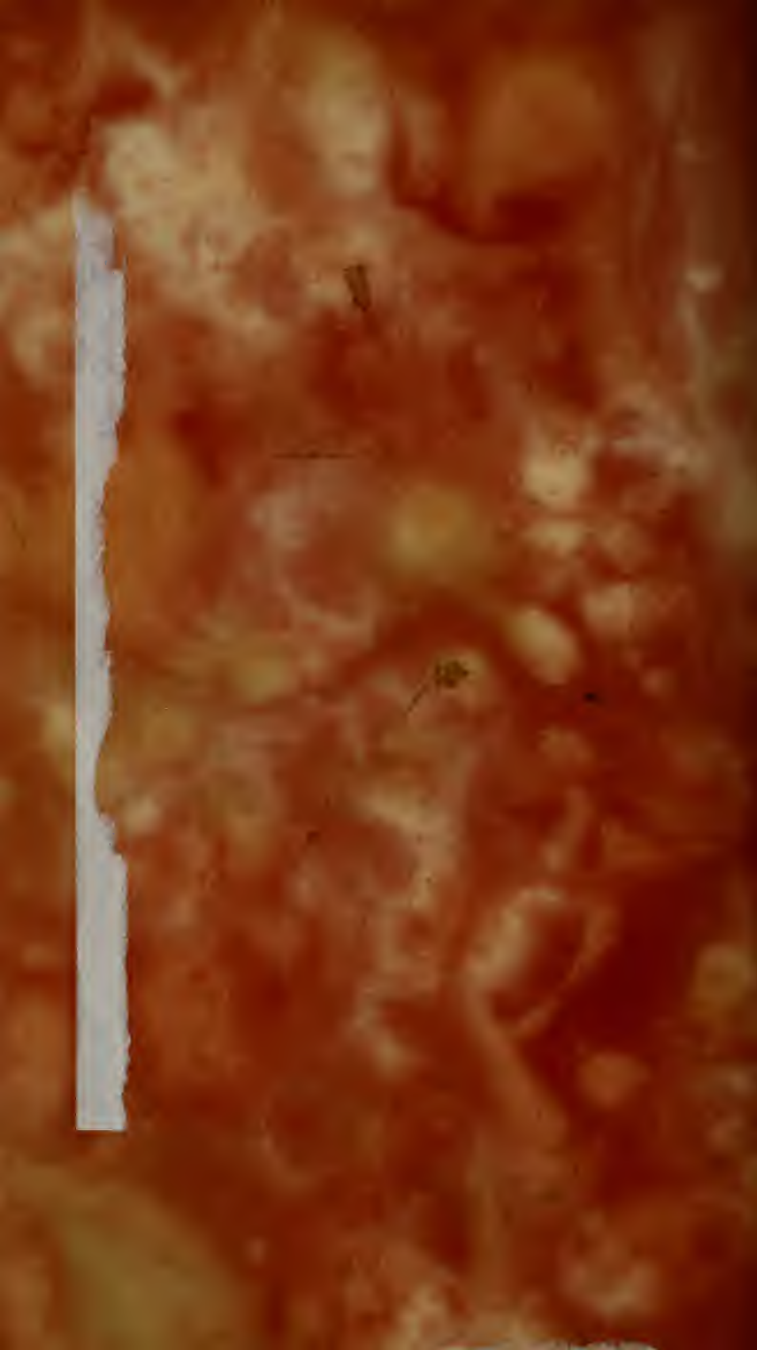
“ I will,” he answered, “ I will ; but will you not say one word to comfort and console me, in thus parting from all I hold dear, for a time the limits of which I know not ? ”

“ What can I say ? ” rejoined Annette. “ What can I say ? — All I can do is,” she added — and, as the spot where they stood was shadowed by a large buttress which crossed the

window, the blush with which her words were accompanied could hardly be seen — “ All I can do is, to beg you to be careful and prudent for the sake of those here — of all who love and esteem you. You have run so great a risk already, that I cannot but tremble to think of what might be the consequence of any other act of rashness — and now, go ! pray go quickly. — Fare you well ! ”

Thus saying, she turned towards the door ; but Ernest detained her for one moment longer, to press his lips again and again upon her hand. Again he felt that it trembled in his own ; and her agitation, coupled with the words that he spoke, gave an assurance to his heart which was not a little consoling to him.

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